

Howard N. Lupovitch



Jews at the Crossroads

Tradition and
Accommodation
during the Golden Age
of the Hungarian Nobility



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1729–1878

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“In medio tutissimus ibis”
(Ovid)

“...כי הכל לפי ראות טובי העיר לפי מנהג קדמונים או לפי צורך שעה.”
“Everything shall be according to the view of the communal elders,
the customs of old, or the needs of the day.”
(Rabbenu Gershom ben Meir)

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A Note on Sources: The Protocols of Miskolc

The main sources used in this re-examination of the history of Miskolc Jewry are the communal protocols of the Miskolc Jewish community. These protocols are contained in ten separate documents that cover the periods 1812–1860. The first, *Ha-Protokol He-Hadash* [The New Protocols] is the protocol of the Jewish Burial Society and covers the period 1812–1842. It is written in Hebrew and Yiddish-Deutsch. It is 141 folios long. Individual entries are numbered and often but not always dated. When a date is included, it is not always a specific date but, in some cases, a month (e.g. August 1820).

The second document, *Prothocol fun der löbliche Borchoder[sic] Comitatz israelitischen Gemeinde welch dieses jahr erschafte worden ist/Protokol mi-bnei ha-Komitatz Borsod nityased bish'at asefat bnei ha-Galil zum Tolerantz Anlag bishnat 5585* is the protocol of a county council convened by 1820 to assess and collect the Toleration Tax from Jews in Borsod County. It covers the years 1825–1851, and thus overlaps with other protocol documents. It is written in Yiddish-Deutsch, and is 139 folio style pages long. Entries are not numbered and sporadically dated.

The third document, *Pinkas Ha-Kehilla* [Communal Record Book], is the protocol of the Kehilla from May 1833 to April 1834. It is written in Hebrew and Yiddish-Deutsch with regular, not folio style, pagination. Entries are dated but not numbered.

The fourth document, *Protocolle der Ehrsammen Israelitische Gemeinde* [Protocol of the Respectable Israelite Community], is the protocol of the Miskolc Kehilla. It covers the period May 1835 through May

1846. It has entries in Yiddish-Deutsch and Hungarian. After 1839, it is written solely in Hungarian. The document is written in folio style, beginning with page #226:a and ending with page #456:b. Entries are numbered and dated.

The fifth document, *Borsod vármegyebeli Izraelita község jegyzőkönyv* [The protocol of the Borsod County Israelite community] is the protocol of the Borsod County Kehilla. It covers the period from January 1840 through May 1847. It is written in Hungarian with regular pagination. Entries are numbered and dated.

The sixth document, *Protocolle der Cultusgemeinde* [Protocol of the Congregation] is the protocol of the Miskolc Kehilla from April 1847 – May 1848. It is written in Hungarian with regular pagination. Entries are numbered and dated.

The seventh document, *Hitközségi Jegyzőkönyv* [Communal Protocol], covers the period May 1848 – June 1849. It is written in Hungarian with regular pagination. Entries are numbered and dated.

The eighth document, *Protocolle der Borsod Izraelitische Cultusgemeinde* [Protocol of the Borsod Israelite Religious Community] covers the period April–October 1849, and January 1850 – April 1851. It is written in Hungarian with regular pagination. Pages 26–75 are missing. Entries are numbered and dated.

The ninth document, *Izraelita község jegyzőkönyve*. [Protocol of the Israelite Community] covers the period July 1857 – December 1860. It is written in German with regular pagination. Entries are neither numbered nor dated. Page 113 is used twice.

The tenth document, *Izraelita Megyei Jegyzőkönyv* (sic) [Israelite County Protocol] covers October 1854 – October 1856 and August 1859 – November 1862. It is written in German and, after 1860, in Hungarian with regular pagination. Entries are numbered but not dated.

List of Abbreviations

Protokol	<i>Ha-Protokol</i> He-Hadash
Protocolle	<i>Protocolle der Ehrsammen Israelitische Gemeinde</i>
Jegyzőkönyv	<i>Borsod vármegyebeli Izraelita község jegyzőkönyve</i>
Cultusgemeinde	<i>Protocolle der Cultusgemeinde</i>
KVA	<i>Kolerára Vonatkozó Anyagai</i>
TIAS	<i>Törvényszéknek Iratai Acta Sedralia</i>
BAZML	Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County Archive
MOL	Magyar Országos Levéltár (The National Archives of Hungary)
MHJ(MZsO)	Monumenta Judaica Hungariae (Magyar Zsidó Oklevéltár)

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Preface

Hearing of my intention to study the Jews of Miskolc (MEESH-koltz), Hungary, a Budapest-born gentleman posed the following question: “Who would possibly want to study Altoona, Pennsylvania?” The man posed this question rhetorically and with a trace of condescension, but his comment reflected a distinctly Budapest-centric perception of Hungarian and Hungarian Jewish history. By the beginning of the twentieth century, Budapest had emerged as a great European metropolis; mid-sized Hungarian cities and towns such as Miskolc paled in comparison to the jewel of the Danube. The truncation of Hungary by the post-World War I settlement into a small, land-locked “rump” state further exacerbated the tendency to identify Budapest with the Hungarian state while ignoring the remainder of the country. After World War II, as the communist regime devoted considerable resources toward transforming Miskolc into a model industrial city, Hungarians regarded Miskolc not only as a symbol of communist oppression and intrusion, but also as a visible example of communist indifference to aesthetics, and their willingness to deface the landscape in the name of industrial development. Today, a decade and a half after the collapse of the communist regime, Miskolc is a scarred remnant of an unpleasant chapter in recent Hungarian history.

By denying the importance of a communal history of a town like Miskolc—or Altoona, for that matter—the man from Budapest also articulated the tendency in modern Jewish historiography to devote the lion’s share of attention to larger centers of Jewish life, ignoring

the smaller communities. In one sense, however, equating Miskolc and Altoona points out the importance of the communal histories of all the cities and towns that stand in the shadow of Budapest, New York, London, Paris, Vienna, and other centers of culture and politics. Dramatic historical events generally occur in large urban centers and often overshadow the mundane rhythm of communal life; exploring a smaller town provides an opportunity to examine the ebb and flow of communal relations on a local level.

The need to redress this historiographical imbalance led me to write about Jews in a mid-range town in Hungary to counter-balance the heavy emphasis on Budapest. Of course, it is impossible to comprehend Hungarian Jewry without including Budapest—not least of all since, by the end of the nineteenth century, nearly one-quarter of Hungarian Jewry lived there. Yet more than three-fourths of Hungarian Jewry lived in small and mid-range towns, making the small-town experience equally integral to understanding Hungarian Jewry.

The task of studying Jewish life in a mid-range Hungarian town was formidable given the paucity of memoirs, newspapers, and other sources ordinarily associated with a project of this kind. This task was simplified when the Jewish Theological Seminary acquired the protocols of the Jewish community of Miskolc, by 1848 the third largest Jewish community in Hungary after Budapest and Nagyvárad, and the fourth largest city. These protocols provide a rare uninterrupted account of Jewish communal life during the first two-thirds of the nineteenth century, a sharp contrast to the otherwise spotty chronological record of small-town Jewish life in Hungary.

Using these protocols, along with materials from archives in Budapest and Miskolc—correspondence between Jews and their noble benefactors, judicial records of local and county magistrates, and an extensive collection of material on the cholera epidemic of 1831—I was able to reconstruct the trials and travails, successes and failures, controversies and routines that marked Jewish communal life in Miskolc. At its most elemental level, then, this book is a grassroots case-study in the formation and coming of age of Jewish communal life in eighteenth-and nineteenth-century Europe. Like Mack Walker's eloquent study of mid-sized German hometowns, this book follows the transformation of an upstart community—that, at the end of the

eighteenth century, operated with the intimacy of an extended family—into a mature, mid-range Ashkenazic community.

As I made my way through these documents, I discovered in Miskolc a novel transformation of Jewish identity. Miskolc was the largest traditional community in Hungary outside of Budapest, and, after 1878, the largest Orthodox community. I had expected, therefore, to find a minority of enlightened, acculturated Jews struggling against a recalcitrant, unacculturated traditionalist majority. Instead I discovered that, in addition to being the largest, Miskolc Jews were also among the most moderately traditional in Hungary; moderate in their willingness to balance their traditional beliefs and observances with the expectations attached to citizenship and admission to the Magyar nation. While committed to religious observance, Miskolc Jews were highly acculturated, Hungarian-speaking by the end of the nineteenth century, and strongly identifying with Magyar culture and national aspirations.

Given this hybrid identity, I thought perhaps that Miskolc Jewry was a Hungarian outpost of Neo-Orthodox Judaism. While the mixture of religious observance and acculturation in Miskolc resembled German Neo-Orthodoxy in its apposition of tradition and innovation, the manner in which Miskolc Jews arrived at this hybrid traditionalism differed fundamentally. Neo-Orthodox Judaism was a self-conscious attempt to refashion Judaism in response to the loss of emancipation, while defending Jewish tradition from the innovations introduced by the Reform Movement. In contrast, Miskolc Jews adapted their traditional way of life unselfconsciously through the expansion and development of communal institutions, insulating the fluid outlook of Miskolc Jews from the more sharply defined religious positions of the latter half of the nineteenth century—Orthodoxy and Neolog.

The fluid traditionalism of Miskolc recalled an earlier age when the boundary between tradition and innovation had not been hardened by the ideological disputes between traditionalists and progressives; and not galvanized by an attempt to regain civic equality, which Miskolc Jews, like the rest of Habsburg Jewry, had never obtained and never lost. The leading rabbinic voices in Miskolc had little interest in the ideological debates between Orthodoxy and Neology and were reticent about everything except their unwillingness to join in the po-

lemical give and take between rival movements. Although eventually affiliating with Orthodoxy, Miskolc Jews had less in common with Orthodoxy or any nineteenth century movement than with the fluid traditionalism of the eighteenth century.

As I tried to contextualize this religious mentality, I discovered that its emergence and perseverance was facilitated by two concurrent, interconnected developments in Hungarian politics and society: the preeminent role of various strata within the nobility in Hungarian economic, political, and cultural life; and the ongoing efforts to repopulate and reconstruct East Central and Northeastern Hungary from the end of the seventeenth century onward. From the eighteenth century on, the nobility's upper and middle strata dominated county politics, and played a preeminent role in the development of Magyar nationalism. To this end, they were engaged in a multifarious effort to resist the absolutist, centralizing, initiatives of the Habsburg government, improve and expand the economy on a local and state level, and forge a Magyar nationalism that combined the old notion of a noble nation with the romantic idea of a popular nation based primarily on the Magyar language. The predominance of the upper and middle nobility attenuated the expectations associated with the extension of citizenship to Jews. This was a tortuous process, whose ebb and flow cannot be measured simply in terms of emancipation, enlightenment, and assimilation—the conventional standards of change and continuity in modern Jewish history—but rather in terms of the growing complexity of noble–Jewish relations.

Initially, this relationship consisted of a series of commercial arrangements primarily between magnates and leading Jewish merchants, estate managers, and moneylenders. During the eighteenth century, the upper-nobility came to regard Jews as commercially productive partners in an ongoing effort to rebuild the urban, commercial infrastructure of developing towns like Miskolc, and expected total support for and cooperation in economic and political matters.

From the 1830s on, the relationship between Jews and nobles expanded in complexity, incorporating broader segments of Jewry and nobility. The commercial relationship between individual Jews and magnate benefactors crystallized into a more formalized relationship as county diets—the mainstay of the middle-nobility—came to expect the

assistance of the Jewish communal leadership of mid-range Jewish communities like Miskolc in county administration, particularly in the county effort to regulate immigration. Other nobles drawn from the upper and middle ranks of the nobility, who spearheaded the Magyar national and cultural revival, expected Jews to embrace the Magyar language and culture and to help insure Magyar dominance over rival national movements. In exchange for meeting these two expectations, the upper and middle nobility—the heart and soul of Hungarian politics and Magyar nationalism—gave Jews entry into the Magyar nation and wide access to virtually all levels of Hungarian society and polity during the nineteenth century—including entry into the nobility itself.

Neither an expectation of commercial productivity, administrative cooperation, nor linguistic acculturation, however, presumed that Jews abandon their commitment to religious observance or communal solidarity. This, along with a century-old impulse toward religious latitudinarianism between Catholic and Protestant nobles alike, divorced the debate over Jewish emancipation in Hungary from the religious behavior or communal organization of Hungarian Jews. With few exceptions, proponents of Jewish emancipation did not distinguish economically productive, patriotic religiously traditional Jews from economically productive, patriotic religiously progressive Jews. This allowed Miskolc Jews to pick and choose unselfconsciously between tradition and innovation without a lingering concern that adherence to a particular custom might jeopardize their chances for civic amelioration.

As I fleshed out the gradual transformation of Jewish identity and growing complexity of noble–Jewish relations in Miskolc—and the interdependence of these two processes—it became apparent that both were affected by the fact that Borsod County and Miskolc, the county seat, were located on the Hungarian frontier. The use of the term “frontier” in this context requires clarification. I am not using this term in a geographic sense, that is, to refer to a borderland. Borsod County, after all, was an interior county of Hungary until 1920; Miskolc was hardly a borderland town in comparison with Kassa, Eperjes, Munkács, and Ungvár. Instead, I am using the term frontier in the demographic, economic, and administrative sense. Miskolc and Borsod County were situated squarely in the part of Hungary that was rebuilt virtually from scratch during the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, a region that

extended as far west as Pest and as far eastward as Debrecen. Thus, in the same way that vast reaches of the American west between the Mississippi River and the Sierra Madres were widely regarded as the American frontier though not borderlands, I am defining Miskolc and Borsod County as part of the Hungarian Frontier. Like in the American West, the pressing need to repopulate Borsod County, to rebuild urban and commercial life, and construct an efficient state apparatus there modified the existing social structure, creating new possibilities for Jews and other ordinarily stigmatized groups.

The city of Miskolc, too, was affected by frontier conditions that transformed it into a town with an unusual legal and political status that had lasting implications for Jews. Unlike the vast majority of towns in Hungary, Miskolc was neither an autonomous free city nor a magnate-controlled market town—the conventional bifurcated categories of urban life in Central and Eastern Europe. Legally, Miskolc was a chartered town, having been designated a crown city (*koronai város*) by the royal crown at the beginning of the eighteenth century, and a royal free city in 1848. In fact, neither crown city nor royal free city status mattered much in this case. Once Miskolc became the seat of Borsod County, real authority and power in Miskolc was in the hands of the county's upper and middle nobility of Borsod County. The one exception that proved the rule was the 1850s when Miskolc was governed directly by the Habsburg government, whose absolutist designs undermined the chartered status of the town no less than the aims of the county nobles.

The limited importance of the town's chartered status precluded the typical exclusion of Jews from a chartered town. The rapid growth of Miskolc Jewry during the first half of the nineteenth century was reminiscent of a magnate-controlled market town. The virtually unrestricted opportunities for Jewish merchants, artisans, and industrialists in the economic and political life of the town, especially after 1872, consummated more than a century of nobility-driven aims assuring the inclusion of Jews in the economic and political life of the town.

There was, however, a crucial difference between Miskolc and other market towns. The latter were controlled by a single magnate family, subordinating Jewish denizens to the family's whims. This was

never the case in Miskolc, owing to the frontier situation of Borsod County. As Borsod County was resettled and rebuilt during the eighteenth century, eight magnate families sent members there to get a foothold—the Esterházy, Dessewffy, Festetics, Coburg, Perényi, Csáky, Vay, and Szathmáry families—all of whom eventually established a presence in Miskolc. As a result, there was no single dominant magnate family in Miskolc or Borsod County.

This meant that, unlike magnate-controlled towns in more established regions of Hungary, Miskolc Jews were never issued a *privilegium* from magnate benefactors. Rather, the status of Miskolc Jewry ebbed and flowed in an ongoing triangular struggle between the royal crown, local burghers, and Borsod County magnates. Jewish status in Miskolc was an amalgamation of individual arrangements between Jews and a dozen benefactors, as interpreted and implemented by local magistrates and other county officials.

That Miskolc was neither a typical chartered or magnate-controlled town at once complicated and facilitated my efforts to contextualize the development of Miskolc Jewry. Complicated because of the absence of a single, dominant magnate family. Unlike Moshe Rosman's pioneering work on Polish Jewry that drew largely on the archival records of a single Polish magnate family, and Rebecca Gates-Coon's study of Esterházy-controlled Sopron County, or Éva Gál's work on the Zichys in and around Óbuda, examining noble-Jewish relations in Borsod County meant combing through the family archives of a dozen leading noble families. Each of these families, moreover, regarded Miskolc or Borsod County as peripheral parts of its estate several decades into the nineteenth century; thus I found fewer documents pertaining to Miskolc and Borsod County than to those towns and counties deemed more central and important. On the other hand, the frontier, peripheral situation of Borsod County and Miskolc prompted the magnates residing in or administering these areas to set aside and look beyond the conventional corporate hierarchy in the name of economic and urban development; this underlined the differences between frontier and more established regions of Hungary, not least of all with respect to Jews.

The upshot is that the transformation of Jewish identity and the ebb and flow of noble-Jewish relations in Miskolc were interdepend-

ent dimensions of rebuilding the Hungarian frontier, each proceeding gradually and tortuously during the eighteenth and nineteenth century. With the aim of comprehending these processes and their effect on one another, I have chosen 1729 as the starting point of the book, partly for symbolic reasons. It is impossible to narrow down when the first Jew settled permanently in Miskolc more precisely than sometime between 1727 and 1736, when the first Moravian Jewish immigrants settled there. 1729, the year Miskolc became the seat of Borsod County, marked the first step toward Miskolc becoming a town dominated by the county nobility and not urban burghers, underlining the link between the Jewish and noble presence in Miskolc.

I have divided the century and a half following 1729 into three parts. The first covers the beginnings of organized Jewish life in Miskolc until the eve of the outbreak of the cholera epidemic of 1831. During this period the nobles vitiated municipal restrictions on Jewish settlement in Miskolc in an attempt to rebuild the economy and subdue political rivals, allowing the Jewish community to increase slowly until 1780, and then quadruple between 1780 and 1831. This surge transformed the Jewish community from a loose amalgamation of families who happened to live in the same town and functioned like an extended family, into a community organized more tightly, though still unofficially, around the Jewish Burial Society. In addition, noble–Jewish relations evolved from individual relations between Jews and nobles into a relationship between a syndicate of Jewish families who dominated the Burial Society, and a syndicate of noble families who dominated county politics.

The second section covers the period between 1831 and 1848, pivotal years in Miskolc whose decisive though less overtly significant developments have heretofore been overshadowed by the legal reforms enacted by the Diet of 1839–40. During this period, the county nobility refined its policy of unrestricted Jewish settlement. In an effort to restore order and improve local government following the Cholera Epidemic of 1831 and the ensuing peasant uprising, they excluded unproductive immigrants. At the same time, they facilitated a more orderly Jewish communal administration by recognizing the Jewish Artisans Guild and by acknowledging the heretofore unofficial leadership of leading Miskolc families over Jews throughout the county.

While this recognition did not give Jewish communal leaders the authority associated with a corporate community, they discovered a new source of authority in their control over the communal institutions that provided the benefits of communal membership. By the end of the 1840s, they had created a full-array of communal institutions. This section concludes by analyzing how the maturing of communal life displaced elite women from their previously prominent role, leading to the founding of the Miskolc Jewish Women's Association. The founding of the Miskolc Jewish Women's Association was a response by elite women to their diminishing role in communal affairs; and, as such, it was a vivid illustration of a community discovering the luxury of excluding women as it came of age during the 1840s.

The third section explores how a mature Miskolc Jewry was drawn into two protracted, state-wide debates over the future of Hungarian Jewry: the emancipation debate of the 1840s that culminated with the Emancipation Edicts of 1849 and 1867; and the conflict and eventual schism between traditional and progressive Jews. These conflicts tested the ability of Miskolc Jewry to resist the increasingly extreme outlooks that dominated Hungarian Jewry by the end of the 1860s. Chapter 8 places Miskolc Jewry in the ebb and flow of the debate over Jewish emancipation during the 1840s and its implications for the debate during the 1860s. This is essential toward understanding towns like Miskolc where the events of 1848 had far less impact than language reform and the push toward Magyarization within the liberal reform movement. For Miskolc Jews, the centrality of linguistic acculturation as the price of civic amelioration and admission to the Magyar Nation was far more significant than the short-lived emancipation edict of 1849.

This section then examines the dispute over the new synagogue. As it became more established, Miskolc Jewry was also drawn into the state-wide conflict that divided Hungarian Jewry at the end of the 1860s. One of the focal points of this conflict was whether the newly completed synagogue in Miskolc would have a choir and an organ. For the first time, Jewish leaders across Hungary took an active interest in the actions and decisions of Miskolc Jews. Orthodox leadership in particular pressured Miskolc Jews to conform to the dictates of Orthodoxy. True to form, Miskolc Jews affiliated with Orthodoxy after a

protracted wavering period, and even then refused to abandon the innovations they had undertaken prior to affiliating.

I conclude this narrative with two events from 1878: the flooding of the city and the affiliation of Miskolc Jewry with Orthodoxy. Because much of the city was rebuilt afterward, the aftermath of the flood symbolically recalled the frontier atmosphere of the early eighteenth century, bringing the external situation of the Jews full circle in 170 years. At the same time, the travails of rebuilding the city after 1878 illustrate how far the city and its Jewish community had developed during the intervening century and a half. The interplay between the Jewish community, the city of Miskolc, and Borsod County during and after the flood indicated how tightly woven Miskolc Jewry was into the fabric of city and county administration, consummating a process that began a century earlier.

The affiliation with Orthodoxy also brought the Jews full circle. The original Jewish settlers had left a well-developed Moravian super-communal structure. In 1878, Miskolc Jewry joined the Orthodox movement, another super-communal structure. The tepid connection between Miskolc and Hungarian Orthodoxy following a decade of uncertainty as to whether affiliate at all, underlined the hardening of religious categories within Hungarian Jewry, and the difficulty Miskolc Jews had in conforming to any category.

From this point until the post-World War One settlement, the broader contours of Jewish life in Miskolc remained largely unchanged. Miskolc Jews were affected by the sporadic outbursts of anti-Semitism, but the traditional world of Miskolc remained constant, Miskolc Jews moving significantly neither to left nor to the right. As with the rest of Hungarian Jewry, World War One and the postwar settlement radically transformed the political world of Miskolc and Borsod County, leaving that period beyond the scope of the present study.

A cursory glance at the table of contents suggests that I have devoted undue attention to topics that generally are not afforded such an integral position, and have glossed over other topics that ordinarily are treated more extensively. This was due, in part, to the availability of secondary literature on certain topics, and the scarcity of secondary literature on others, but largely to my contention that the rhythm of Jewish life in Miskolc was not dictated primarily by formal acts of

emancipation, self-conscious programs of cultural enlightenment, or affiliation with a particular religious movement; but rather by the gradual evolution of communal institutions to meet the increasingly complex and ever-changing demands of the nineteenth century. Hence I devote more attention to relations between Jews and magnates, the social role of the Jewish Burial Society, the squabbles over Jewish educational reform, and the impact of the cholera epidemic of 1831 than to more conventional topics such as the spread of religious reform into Hungary, the civic reforms of the Diet of 1839–40 and the debate over Jewish emancipation, the Hungarian Revolution of 1848–49, the emergence of Orthodoxy, and the conflict between Orthodoxy and Neology during the 1860s, all of which have been treated elsewhere.

A Note on Sources

Some readers may not be familiar with some of the complexities that accompany a study connected with Hungary and the Habsburg Empire. Geographically, the Kingdom of Hungary is divided into several regions. In the center lies the Great Hungarian Plain, known as the *Alföld* in Hungarian and the *Unterland* in German and Yiddish. North of the Great Plain are the Hungarian Highlands, known as the *Felvidék* in Hungarian and the *Überland* in German and Yiddish. *Unterland*, the corresponding but somewhat ambiguous German and Yiddish term for the Alföld, refers not only to the plains region but also to the Northeastern counties. It is thus not only a geographic term but also a culturally charged term that distinguishes the more “Polish” Jews of Northeastern Hungary from the rest of Hungarian Jewry.

The Kingdom of Hungary was part of the Habsburg Empire from 1526 to 1918. After 1526, the king of Hungary and the Habsburg Emperor—and, until 1804, the Holy Roman Emperor—were the same person. Because Habsburg Emperors, except during the reign of Joseph II, ruled in Hungary as kings, Habsburg policy in Hungary is referred to in this study as royal and not as imperial. Thus, for example, Maria Theresa’s Toleration Tax was an imperial tax on Jews outside of Hungary but a royal tax on Jews in Hungary.

The Hungarian nobility was an equally complex entity during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, with three distinguishable strata.

In order to avoid confusion, I will use the term “nobility” to refer to all noblemen, and “magnate” or “leading-nobleman” to refer to the upper nobility. Because members of the middle-nobility began to refer to themselves as “gentry” only during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, and thus outside the parameters of this work, I will use “middle-nobility” instead.

Several different currencies were in use in Hungary during the nineteenth century. Their relative value depended not only on the exchange rate between them, but also on whether they referred to gold or silver coin, or to paper money. The Gulden was a form of gold currency and thus had the highest value. Forints and Kreuzers were a silver currency, and Wiener Wendung was a paper currency and the most susceptible to inflation.

The multi-ethnic character of Hungary poses the additional complication of foreign names and expressions. Frequently, for example, certain places were called by more than one name. Whenever possible, I will use the name commonly in use during the first three quarters of the nineteenth century, thus Pressburg and not Pozsony or Bratislava, and Ungvár and not Uzsgorod. In cases where more than one name was in use, such as the Hungarian town of Győr/Raab, I will select one name and indicate, in a note, that the other was also in use. The same is true of local titles.

Hebrew and Yiddish names that recur frequently, particularly terms such as “*Kebilla*” which do not translate well into English, I will use in their original language. Less familiar terms that recur I will also use in their original language, indicating my intention to do so in a note. Hebrew and Yiddish personal names I will generally translate, thus “Jonah” and not “Yona.”

The completion of this book allows me the opportunity to thank those whose assistance and guidance made it possible. This book is an expansion of my doctoral dissertation, which I completed at Columbia University under the direction of Professors Michael Stanislawski, Yosef Yerushalmi and István Deák. Their guidance and knowledge of history were a source of inspiration, and their high standards forced me to probe one step further and avoid settling for easy answers. Their *menschlichkeit* and *emberség* made my entry into the world of academia not only stimulating and challenging but also enjoyable.

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Introduction

Rethinking the Rhythms of Emancipation and Enlightenment

In March 1867, the Jewish community of Miskolc commemorated the centennial of its oldest institution, the *Hevra Kadisha* or Burial Society. On this occasion, the Burial Society was formally renamed the “Miskolc Hungarian Israelite Association for Benevolence and Progress.” The prologue to the Magyar-language statutes of this renamed organization included a dual commitment to religious tradition and Magyar patriotism: “Based on the principle that Judaism rests on study, worship, acts of loving kindness, the adherents of traditional observance reestablished this benevolent society...in the name of national and spiritual education, especially that of local school-age youth....” Among the aims of the organization was a commitment “to disseminate national and spiritual education by supporting indigent school-children, especially those who can participate in choral singing.”¹

This occasion would soon be overshadowed by the emancipation of Hungarian Jewry in 1867 and by the ensuing schism within Hungarian Jewry between Orthodox and Neolog Jews. In retrospect, while the historical importance of the 1867 Emancipation Edict and the schism is undeniable, the centennial celebration revealed more about Miskolc Jews; in particular, their ability to balance between tradition and Magyar nationalism, at the moment when Hungarian Jewry was being polarized by seemingly irreconcilable differences between traditional and progressive Jews.

In fact, the new manifesto of the Burial Society exemplified the religious outlook of Miskolc Jewry. Miskolc Jews were avowedly traditional in their religious observance, yet, during the nineteenth century,

they adopted Magyar as their spoken language, innovated the synagogue service, and added a large secular dimension to their communal schools. They identified with Magyar culture and nationalism. Far from polarized, Miskolc Jewry was an exemplar of tradition and innovation seamlessly intertwined.

Miskolc was not an isolated exception, in this regard, but one of scores of Jewish communities in nineteenth-century Europe that combined elements of the old and the new without one displacing the other. Walking the streets of Miskolc during the first half of the nineteenth century, one might easily have imagined oneself in Cologne, Opatow, Strasbourg, or even Manchester. Jews in Miskolc were bi- or trilingual throughout the nineteenth century. They prayed and conducted other religious rituals in Hebrew throughout the nineteenth century. They spoke Yiddish at the beginning of the nineteenth century, but thereafter switched first to German and then to Magyar by the last quarter.²

The residential and occupational profiles of Miskolc Jewry were also typical. Most Jews in Miskolc, though never confined by law or custom to a particular part of the town, lived concentrated within a quarter-mile radius of the intersection of Kazinczy and Palóczy Street, an area understood to be the Jewish part of the city. Their occupational profile was a cross between Jewish communities of Moravia and Galicia. As in Moravia, most Jews in Miskolc engaged in some form of commerce; a smaller number engaged in crafts. After 1830, following an influx of Jews from Galicia, there was a large number of Jewish tavern keepers.³

As in these other communities, the hodgepodge of traditional and novel beliefs and behavior patterns in Miskolc makes it difficult to define a moment, a decade, or even a generation when Jews in Miskolc exchanged the all-encompassing Jewish identity of the Middle Ages for the compartmentalized identity of the modern world. The first indications of this transformation appeared late in the eighteenth century, but antecedent characteristics persisted into the twentieth century.

The political context in which Miskolc Jewry developed is no less elusive. During the century prior to emancipation, Jews in Miskolc, along with the rest of Hungarian Jewry, encountered state, county,

and municipal governments that combined elements of medieval feudalism, eighteenth-century absolutism, and nineteenth-century liberalism. At first glance, therefore, the path to Jewish emancipation in Hungary appears typically Central European, closely paralleling the emancipation of German Jewry: the initiatives of enlightened despots cut short by the conservative backlash to the French Revolution and Napoleon; the liberal impulses of the 1840s climaxing with the false dawn of 1848; and, finally, emancipation at the end of the 1860s. Until the end of the 1860s, Hungarian Jews were not emancipated like Jews in Western Europe, but, in sharp contrast to Jews in the Russian Empire, their civic status improved steadily during the nineteenth century.

Although such legal developments marked important steps forward for Hungarian Jewry, they do not capture the torturous development of Hungarian polity. The defining feature of Hungarian politics was the preeminent role of the nobility in its relationship with the ruling Habsburg dynasty. The Hungarian nobility remained a separate caste throughout the nineteenth century, and its middle and upper strata retained many of their feudal privileges into the twentieth century. More than any other European nobility except Polish nobles in Galicia, the Hungarian nobility dominated Hungarian politics, particularly on the county level; and the upper stratum maintained significant influence in state politics as well. Its tenacious hold over county government limited the impact of Habsburg efforts toward state centralization.⁴ The latter was a complex and on-going negotiation between the survival of noble privilege and the steady elevation of the civic status of non-nobles that carried Jews in Miskolc, along with the rest of Hungarian Jewry, gradually from corporate autonomy to civic equality.

Miskolc thus offers a useful alternative venue through which to probe beyond the polarized image of Hungarian Jewry and, for that matter, European Jewry. It may appear odd that a Hungarian Jewish community such as Miskolc would be a suitable case study through which to reexamine the putative sharp divide between the old and new religious and political forms. This sharp divide has been a cornerstone of Hungarian Jewish Historiography, juxtaposing groups of Jews who were highly critical of one another. Hungarian Jewry in-

cluded religious denominations who were mutually antagonistic to an unparalleled degree. The irreconcilable differences between Neolog and Orthodox Jews led the latter to separate legally from the former in 1870. Hungary was also the cradle of Ultra-Orthodoxy, the most un-enlightened, ardently anti-assimilationist Jews in Europe. Ultra-Orthodox Jews were often more critical of modern-Orthodox Jews than of Neolog Jews. Alongside these religiously affiliated Orthodox and Neolog Jews, Hungary included the most thoroughly and successfully assimilated Jews, who had dismissed all forms of religious affiliation as antiquated. This segment of Hungarian Jewry assimilated not only into mainstream Hungarian society but into its elite: where else had 350 Jewish families been ennobled? Finally, Theodore Herzl and Max Nordau, the leaders of the Zionist movement and among the harshest critics of Neolog, assimilationist, and Orthodox Jews, were Hungarian Jews, as were some of Zionism's most strident and obstreperous assimilated and Ultra-Orthodox opponents.

It is this polarized image, however, that makes a reconsideration of Hungarian Jewry an ideal venue to begin reexamining the sharp divide between traditional and progressive Jews, and Miskolc an ideal place to start. The social and political conditions that inured Miskolc Jewry from the ideological conflicts of the nineteenth century were present in other communities, in Hungary and elsewhere in Europe, that similarly eschewed a hard-line traditional or progressive stance. Foremost among these conditions was the fact that Miskolc Jewry formed in a part of Hungary that was rebuilt largely from scratch during the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, after being devastated and depopulated by the Ottoman occupation.

From the outset, the rise and development of Miskolc Jewry reflected the characteristics of Jewish communities in frontier regions. The Jews of Miskolc lacked a preexisting rabbinate or communal leadership, while benefitting from the lack of an established political system. They were thus immersed in what Yosef Yerushalmi described as "the dynamics of young and reconstituted communities,"⁵ driven as much or more by the pragmatic demands of maximizing limited resources than by ideological concerns. Miskolc Jewry created from scratch an infrastructure of communal institutions and administration in a town that was, to borrow from the words of Frederick

Jackson Turner, “developing... the primitive economic and political conditions of the frontier into the complexity of city life.”⁶ For a century and a half after the first Jewish settlers arrived during the 1720s, the synergy of an upstart Jewish community in a rapidly changing environment maintained a give and take between continuity and change.

The task of rebuilding the Hungarian frontier belonged to the Hungarian nobility and, in particular, to the magnates—the nobility’s uppermost stratum; thus the rise of Miskolc Jewry depended primarily on its symbiotic relationship with the magnates. From the outset, the heart of this symbiosis was an economic partnership between the Jewish commercial elite and the magnates, the upper stratum of the nobility. Until the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the magnates who governed this expansive region regarded Jews as indispensable partners in the arduous, multifarious task of rebuilding the frontier. Although never a relationship between equals, Jews and magnates needed certain things from each other. As early as 1851, Ignaz Einhorn noted this symbiotic relationship:

The Jew lived off the nobility, from whom he purchased grain, wine, wool, and other agricultural products for resale, while selling to them in turn industrial products which he imported from abroad...In contrast thereto, the poor Slav could not be a lucrative customer, while the German Burgher was an outright competitor.⁷

Nearly a century and a half later, this conceptualization was expanded by Michael Silber, who incorporated the cultural and national context that underlay the commercial role of Hungarian Jewry: “The problem was that Hungary lacked an autochthonous middle-class. Neither the broad stratum of the Magyar lower nobility nor the peasantry were willing to engage in commercial pursuits. Such activity was regarded as something essentially immoral and degrading, not suited to the Magyar spirit.”⁸ This symbiotic relationship was an ever-present undercurrent in the steady though piecemeal amelioration of Jews’ civic status during the nineteenth century.

For older, more established Jewish communities, located predominantly in Western Hungary, this symbiotic relationship imposed harsh restrictions on Jews until the second half of the nineteenth century. Until 1840, Jews in Western Hungary were confined to towns that

were privately owned by a single magnate family. In these towns, Jews were governed by a *privilegium*, or charter of privileges and restrictions, which closely regulated all facets of Jewish life. Jews in Miskolc were never governed by a *privilegium*, partly because more than a dozen magnate families vied for supremacy there, but also because, prior to 1848, Miskolc was never clearly defined as a private town. Instead, the rights and restrictions of Miskolc Jews were determined by an ad hoc series of judicial decisions and precedents. In the absence of a clearly defined legal status for Jews—or, for the town itself—it was easier for the powers that be in Miskolc to exempt Jews from restrictions on settlement, travel, trade, and communal organization when circumstances demanded it. The pressing need to build a political and social infrastructure often demanded it.

During the nineteenth century, the relationship between nobility and Jewry became increasingly complex. What started as a commercial relationship between Jews and magnates took on a political and administrative dimension as leading noblemen solidified their monopoly in Hungarian politics by establishing the county as the fundamental organizational unit of Hungarian politics. The expansion of Jewish communal organization from the town to the county level, reflected and reinforced this larger trend in Hungarian politics. By the mid-nineteenth century, moreover, noble-Jewish relations took on a national and cultural dimension, as nobles of varied ranks and political outlooks came to regard Jews as loyal allies who provided invaluable assistance in moments of crisis—the Cholera Epidemics of 1831, 1849, 1855, and 1873; the fire of 1843, the Revolution of 1848–49, and the Great Flood of 1878—and as indispensable allies in the struggle between Magyar nationalism and rival national movements. Miskolc—a chartered town, a local center of commerce, and an outpost of Magyar culture—was a focal point in the political and national campaigns of the nobility and, hence, in the growing complexity of noble-Jewish relations.

The survival of the nobility as the dominant force in Hungarian politics determined in large part the course and intensity of the debate over Jewish emancipation. Prior to 1848, the notion that Hungarian Jews should receive full civic equality appeared absurd to all but a few isolated idealists, largely because only one-twentieth of the Hungarian

population—the nobility—enjoyed full citizenship. The real point of contention was whether Jews would receive the same rights as other non-noble subjects. Only when non-nobles attained legal equality during and after the Revolution of 1848 did Hungarian statesmen begin to advocate elevating the legal status of Jews and other non-nobles to that of the nobility, although muted expressions had been voiced during the 1830s and 1840s. Thus, the civic status of Hungarian Jews must be assessed in the proper context, namely, alongside the survival of noble privilege and efforts to improve the status of other non-noble groups. The nobility's overriding determination to elevate Magyar nationalism above all others in Hungary, moreover, added the expectation of Jewish assimilation to the expectations that nobles attached to Jewish emancipation.

This growing complexity was not unique to Miskolc, and, more importantly, it predated the debate over Jewish emancipation. A generation before Jewish emancipation became more than a remote possibility in Hungary, the magnates who dominated Miskolc had begun to give those Jews deemed worthy some of the rights and privileges typically associated with emancipation, notably unrestricted settlement, the right to travel and trade freely, and the right to engage in crafts.

Moreover, the magnates extended these privileges to Jews in Miskolc at a minimal price. With few exceptions, the most noteworthy being Lajos Kossuth, Hungarian statesmen generally demanded steadfast loyalty to the nobility and linguistic acculturation, both of which were entirely possible within the framework of traditional Judaism. They expected Jews to adopt the Magyar language and embrace Magyar nationalism, but not in any way that impeded the observance of traditional Judaism.

Miskolc's location in Hungary was crucial in this regard. Miskolc was situated at a juncture of the two great waves of Ashkenazic migration, the Moravian and the Polish. Miskolc, located at the eastern edge of Borsod County, was the eastern edge of the Moravian wave. The Jewish communities of Miskolc and Borsod County, and those in the counties north and west, were settled, for the most part, by Jewish immigrants from Moravia. Across the Sajó River was Zemplén County which, along with other counties northeast of Miskolc, were

settled by Jews from Poland, some of whom made their way into Miskolc and Borsod County.

Hungarian political reformers consistently regarded Jewish immigrants from Galicia as the single greatest threat to the economic development of the Hungarian state and the cultural development of the Magyar nation. At the heart of the debate over Jewish emancipation was a sharp distinction between native born and legally residing Jews—many of whom were immigrants from Moravia or the children of Moravian immigrants—and Jewish immigrants from Galicia. This distinction presupposed that emancipating and assimilating native born and legally residing Hungarian Jews did not preclude excluding the *Galicianers*. Miskolc Jewry was thus the dividing line between those Hungarian Jews deemed assimilable and worthy of emancipation, and those deemed immutably foreign.

That the architects of the two emancipation edicts—László Palóczy and Bertalan Szemere in 1849, and Baron József Eötvös in 1867—had strong ties to an overwhelmingly traditional community like Miskolc Jewry was a telling indication of the fact that they regarded traditional Judaism and Magyar nationalism as wholly compatible. Jews in Miskolc proved themselves worthy of emancipation not by promising to jettison particular Jewish customs or behavior patterns, but rather by participating in the development of Miskolc over the course of three or four generations.

For Jews in Miskolc, the emancipation edicts of 1849 and 1867 were less watershed moments in the political or legal status of Hungarian Jews than a measure of the growing rapprochement between Jews and magnates, and later, between Jews and the upper and middle nobility that dominated county politics. The minimal demands that Hungarian state- and nation-building made on Hungarian Jewry complimented the willingness of traditional Jews to accommodate the demands of the state. Jews in Miskolc thus never faced the dilemma that confronted Jews elsewhere in Central Europe between adhering to traditional Judaism and proving loyalty to the state.

Creating authority

Like other upstart communities, Miskolc Jewry came of age at a time when state efforts to erode the corporate world of the middle ages coincided with an increasingly complex array of religious possibilities. Like the Jewish communities of seventeenth century Amsterdam, eighteenth century Georgian England, and nineteenth century Novorussia and America, Miskolc Jewry lacked a preexisting rabbinic leadership. It was never known for rabbinic scholars or Hasidic masters; even at the height of the religious conflicts that overwhelmed Hungarian Jewry during the 1860s, the rabbi of Miskolc remained largely aloof.

Instead Miskolc Jewry was known for pioneering communal institutions: the Jewish guild, the teachers' training institute, the girls' gymnasium. Each of these institutions reflected the cumulative aims and strategies of several generations of Miskolc Jews, combining elements of traditional Judaism with nineteenth century innovation. The prominent position of institutions in the history of Miskolc attests to the gradual development of communal life in Miskolc during the first three quarters of the nineteenth century. Miskolc Jewry developed, with little fanfare or ideological justification, through the expansion of communal institutions that were grounded in the pragmatic concerns of day to day life: the Burial Society and other voluntary societies, the synagogue, schools, the women's association, and eventually the rabbinate. Miskolc Jewry was a living, breathing example of traditional Jewish life that was, in the words of Haym Soloveitchik, "imbided from parents and friends, and patterned on conduct regularly observed in home and street, synagogue and school; a community whose religious mentality was termed by sociologist Menachem Friedman 'the quotidian norms of traditional life.'"⁹

Without a preeminent rabbinate, Miskolc was a community dominated from the outset by its lay leadership. As in many Jewish communities, the lay leadership was comprised from a syndicate of elite families, whose affluence, political connections, and piety made them the natural choice to manage communal affairs. These families were interconnected by marital and commercial contracts. They cemented their hold over the community primarily by dominating communal institutions.

In lieu of state-sponsored corporate autonomy, these leading families forged an alternative means of enforcing their decisions, which they discovered inadvertently, by the limited administrative and religious mandates they were assigned by the royal crown and the county. From the beginning of the nineteenth century onward they assessed and collected royal and primarily county taxes. They also supervised a melange of communal religious activities: burying the dead, slaughtering and inspecting kosher meat, operating a ritual bath, maintaining the synagogue and other community-owned buildings, engaging the services of a rabbi and other communal employees, and supervising communal schools. They transformed these once purely religious acts into instruments for raising and collecting additional revenue. They then used the added revenue to broaden the range of benefits that they could provide members of the Jewish community. This augmented the value of communal membership, thereby heightening the authority derived from the right to grant or withdraw membership status, a right that the lay leadership guarded zealously.

Control over the Burial Society was a decisive first step in broadening the jurisdiction of the syndicate of families. The Burial Society was the focal point of religious piety, giving the lay leaders who ran it a badly needed measure of legitimacy to decide religious matters in lieu of an established rabbinate. After the emergence of a prestigious rabbinate, the syndicate of families retained and reinforced their religious authority by transforming communal rabbis into salaried employees, thereby subordinating the rabbinate to the authority of the lay leadership.

The tribunal of the Burial Society, more than anything else, laid the basis for the lay leadership to create an authoritative system of Jewish courts even without state sponsorship or a rabbinic presence. They were aided by the willingness of a Jewish constituency to submit to the religious preeminence the communal leaders in their capacity as officers of the Burial Society. This willingness to submit had been a key component of communal leadership even in the corporate world of the Middle Ages, and was even more crucial for a lay-led community in the post-corporate age of religious volunteerism.

The efforts to expand communal authority were complicated by the growing complexity of noble-Jewish relations. As long as the

magnates expected little else from Jews other than tax revenue and commercial profit, Jewish communal leaders could expand communal institutions with little consideration for the needs of the nobles other than paying its taxes and supplying the right nobles with gifts and bribes. From the 1830s on, however, communal leaders were asked to play a greater role in state- and nation-building. They were expected to aid in regulating Jewish immigration, particularly from Galicia; and to transform their Jewish constituents into patriotic Magyars.

By divorcing communal authority from state endorsement, moreover, the lay leadership rendered the latter largely superfluous. This minimized what might otherwise have been deleterious and disruptive effects of wavering state policies regarding Jewish communal administration. Instead, Jewish communal authority was able to incorporate with minimal disruption expectations emanating from external political developments. Even the curtailment of this authority during the 1850s by a neo-absolutist Habsburg regime did not significantly alter the scope of the lay leadership's jurisdiction and authority. This was a stable situation that fostered a stable, pragmatic and cautious approach to communal administration that was not prone to sweeping changes or to extreme resistance to change. The lay leadership of Miskolc preferred instead to pick and choose between existing and novel forms of religious behavior deemed best for the welfare of the Jewish community.

The pragmatic outlook of Miskolc Jewry's lay leadership was further encouraged and sustained by the town's location in the Ashkenazic world.

Miskolc was a key point of intersection between the hodgepodge of religious currents emanating from Moravia and Poland that combined traditional and progressive elements without rejecting one in favor of the other. The three leading intellectual figures in Miskolc during the first three-quarters of the nineteenth century were the Moravian-born Abraham Hochmuth, who studied in Prague under the Galician Maskil Shmuel Rappaport and who would eventually design and implement a dual curriculum education, first in Miskolc, then throughout Hungary; Pinchas Heilprin, a Galician Maskil who immigrated to Miskolc in 1843, and would become an outspoken critic of radical Reform and Orthodox extremism; and Moses Ezekiel Fischmann, the Moravian-born disciple of Ezekiel Landau of Prague who

served as communal rabbi from the 1830s until the end of the 1860s, and who was the target of the Ultra-Orthodox assault.

With minimal intrusion from the rabbinate, lay leaders tempered religious requirements with a pragmatic eye for serving the best interests of the community as a whole. This they did by distinguishing religious and non-religious aspects of communal life, even within the operation of the same institution. Beginning in the 1840s and especially from the 1860s on, for example, they used Jewish schools to instill in the youth a strong commitment to traditional Judaism and an equally strong affinity for Magyar nationalism and culture.

The pragmatic outlook of lay leaders in Miskolc would face its ultimate test during the 1860s. For more than two years, Miskolc Jewry and its chief-rabbi were the target of a polemical assault by advocates of Ultra-Orthodoxy, an extremist strain of traditional Judaism. Miskolc was thus transformed into an important battleground in the Ultra-Orthodox advance westward into Central Hungary from the Carpathian region and Transylvania. Miskolc Jewry became a key point along the dividing line between the Ultra-Orthodox world that was concentrated primarily in the Northeast, and the rest of Hungarian Jewry; and more generally, between the Orthodox and Neolog parts of Hungary, defined by Viktor Karády as “a diagonal line across the country from northwest to southeast, that is, say, from Pozsony to Brassó.”¹⁰ Though the Ultra-Orthodox assault on Miskolc Jewry was directed primarily at the Miskolc rabbinate, it was rebutted by the lay leadership, whose affinity for Magyar Nationalism could not countenance Ultra-Orthodox rejection of a vernacular sermon. By refusing to ally with Ultra-Orthodoxy, Miskolc Jewry recalled an earlier age dominated by a more pragmatic form of traditional Judaism that reflected, to borrow the words of Edward Fram, “not only the demands of the *halakhab* [Jewish law] but also the emotional, physical, spiritual, and economic needs of its constituency.”¹¹ The debate over the future of the synagogue, the first sustained intra-communal conflict in Miskolc, reflected that the maturing of the Jewish community under the guidance of its lay leadership was a protracted process.

An additional measure of this maturing process is the expanding but ultimately limited role of women. As long as Miskolc Jewry functioned like an extended family, women were present in the external

relations between individual Jews and magnates and in the internal administration of the Burial Society. As Miskolc developed into a network of male-dominated institutions, women retreated from more active roles in communal life to a women's organization whose range of activities was limited by the communal patriarchy.¹² The retreat of women to a backstage role began as the Burial Society took on the role of communal leadership before being supplanted by the Kehilla. For a time, women continued to have a limited say in communal decisions when they hosted officers' meetings in their home as hostesses, helped their husbands and brothers dole out charity, and welcomed the new rabbi when he first arrived. They had a measure of influence, but no official title. By the 1860s, the exclusion of women from communal leadership was complete.

Ironically, the exclusion of Jewish women in Miskolc coincided with a growing communal initiative to provide a more complete education to Jewish girls in order to assure that they passed along a proper religious, ethical, and moral demeanor to their children. Women were excluded at the moment when their education, wealth, and political connections made them ideal would-be leaders to address the tempestuous issues facing the Jewish community: the compatibility of traditional Judaism and Magyar Nationalism. In the dissonance between their abilities and their diminishing opportunities, the Jewish Women's Association was born.

Toward a new hermeneutic of Hungarian Jewish history

The centrality of magnate-Jewish relations and the persistence of a pragmatic, flexible religious outlook suggest that Polish-Jewry rather than German Jewry is the more suitable comparison; that Hungarian Jewry lies "midway between the 'golden freedom of estates' in Poland and the Absolutism prevailing in Western and Central Europe."¹³ As in Hungary, Jews in Poland came increasingly under the rule of local magnates during the eighteenth century. They relied almost exclusively on magnate benefactors for protection from the hostile Christian masses and for economic and residential privileges.

Jews in both states, moreover, settled predominantly in towns and villages ruled by one or more leading magnate families.¹⁴ As in Poland, the distinction between settling in a more or less established Jewish community was crucial in determining the contours of Jewish communal life. As Walter Pietsch noted:

By immigrating to Hungary, Jews not only crossed a state boundary, but abandoned their former homes and, in Hungary, had to adapt themselves to a new rural framework. Let us not forget that their places of origin and the shape of urban settlement simultaneously bore the mark of a fully developed religious and social communal life and the necessary institutions and organization such as the synagogue, school, and burial society. This communal network was absent in Hungarian villages where, in the majority of cases, only one or two Jewish families were able to settle.

Once in Hungary, though, Jewish immigrants from Moravia and, to a lesser extent, from Galicia who had settled in villages continued to migrate, relocating to a small or mid-range town. By 1835, less than 10% of Hungarian Jewry lived in villages, as compared to 35% of Jews in the Czech Lands, 30% of Jews in West Galicia, and 20% of Jews in East Galicia.¹⁵

The differences between magnate–Jewish relations in Hungary and Poland are equally illuminating. The alliance between Jews and magnates in Poland blossomed during the eighteenth century when the royal crown was in sharp decline, thus allowing a unilateral relationship between Jewry and nobility. The partitions of Poland at the end of the eighteenth century triangulated this relationship by placing Jews between the competing interests of the nobility and the reigning Romanov, Hohenzollern, or Habsburg dynasty. The obverse situation took place in Hungary, where Jews faced the administrative pressures of noble and royal officials until the end of the eighteenth century. From the 1790s on, as Habsburg maneuvers to undermine the nobility's authority abated, Jews allied more closely with the nobility and looked less and less to the Habsburgs for privileges and protection. This shift is evident with regard to Miskolc. Except for the added opportunities given to Jews briefly by Joseph II's Patent of Toleration and by Habsburg neo-absolutist policies during the 1850s, Miskolc Jewry owed its existence and growth almost entirely to the growing noble presence.

Historians of Hungarian Jewry, though, have made little use of Polish-Jewry as a comparative case. The presence and potential influx of Jewish immigrants from Galicia was a focal point in the opposition to Jewish emancipation and the rise of Hungarian anti-Semitism. In response, Hungarian Jewish historians made every effort to emphasize the Magyar character and the Bohemian and Moravian origins of Hungarian Jewry, thereby distinguishing the bulk of Hungarian Jewry from the atypical “Polish” Jews who lived in the Northeastern counties of Hungary.

It is not surprising that, until recently, Hungarian Jewish history was largely written from the perspective of patriotic Hungarian Jews who benefited most from emancipation and advocated assimilation most diligently. These historians were largely Jews who lived in Budapest, which entered its heyday during the last third of the nineteenth century, and Jewish inhabitants of the royal free cities of Hungary, who owed their communal existence to the political impulses that ultimately culminated in emancipation. A less prevalent but important counter-current, has focused on Jews who resisted emancipation and assimilation most vehemently—Hungarian Orthodoxy. These works laid a cornerstone for an anti-modernist current that is visible, to this day, in Israeli and American Jewish life.

Because Hungarian Jewry reached its apogee between 1867 and 1918, liberal and orthodox historians alike have tended to assign singular significance to the events of the 1860s that inaugurated and, at least ostensibly, determined the character of the ensuing fifty-year golden age: the Emancipation Edict of 1867 that granted civic equality, and that paved the way for rapid assimilation; and the schism that divided Hungarian Jewry into mutually exclusive traditionalist and progressive communities. What Michael Silber noted with respect to assimilation is an accurate assessment of Hungarian Jewish historiography generally. “The received wisdom about the nature and extent of Jewish assimilation in Hungary has been largely fashioned by the history of the *fin de siècle*, a fact which has unfortunately exercised an undue influence upon the assessment of other periods.”¹⁶ Works on the pre-1867 period tend to focus on events that presaged emancipation and schism. Thus the Diet of 1839–40, which enacted a number of reforms that improved the status of Hungarian Jewry, and the begin-

nings of Orthodoxy in Pressburg generally figure prominently as first steps respectively toward emancipation and religious schism.

The tendency to emphasize the period from the 1860s on is not surprising. The half century between 1867 and 1918 marked the high point not only of Hungarian Jewry but also of the Kingdom of Hungary itself. During this half-century, Hungarian Jewry, and Budapest Jews most of all, experienced an unprecedented and unparalleled level of economic prosperity, political success, and social integration that symbolized not only the greatness of the Dualist Period, but the emergence of European Jewry from the isolation and ostracism of the Middle Ages.

The first three generations of Hungarian Jewish historians lived during the Dualist Period and in its immediate aftermath. Two of the most important historians in the first generation, Leopold Löw and Meir Zipser, participated in the debates over Jewish emancipation during the Revolution of 1848 and in subsequent debates. Löw, rabbi of the royal free city of Szeged, wrote about Jewish educational reform, Jewish residence rights in Hungarian towns, and other issues directly related to the emancipation debate. Zipser, the rabbi of the prestigious Jewish community of Rohonc (Rechnitz, today in Austria), examined similar issues on a local level.¹⁷

The works of Löw, Zipser, and their contemporaries set out to illustrate an inherent compatibility between Jews and Hungarians, primarily by citing a litany of historical examples that attributed anti-Jewish sentiments in Hungary, through the centuries, to foreign elements. Thus, they asserted, the original Magyar conquerors had looked favorably upon their few Jewish subjects until the conversion of the Magyars to Catholicism instigated centuries of anti-Jewish hostility and oppression. Subsequently, other foreign elements—Jesuits, German colonists, and finally, the Habsburgs—exacerbated popular hostility toward Jews. Much of this scholarship emphasized the progressive and western character of Hungarian Jewry in order to debunk the claims of the opponents of emancipation and, later, racial anti-Semites: namely, that Jews were a foreign and un-assimilable element and that, to the extent that Jews could integrate into any gentile culture, they had far more in common with Germans than with Magyars.¹⁸

Although this initial standard of historical scholarship was primitive, it laid the foundation for the next generation of Jewish historians. This latter group produced an enormous and far more sophisticated literature on many facets of Hungarian Jewry, helped largely by the emergence of the Budapest Rabbinical Seminary as a center of Jewish studies, and the strong ties between this institution and the major universities in Budapest. The leading historians of this generation—Sámuel Kohn, Sándor Büchler, Bernát Mandl, Zsigmond Groszmann, and Béla Bernstein, among others—received a dual rabbinic and doctoral education, and brought to bear their broad knowledge of Jewish and Hungarian sources in their work.¹⁹

These scholars expanded on the work of Löw and Zipser in quality and in scope by examining Hungarian Jewry on a national and a communal level. Mandl, for example, expanded Löw's study of Jewish education by examining the impact of the education reforms of Joseph II. Bernstein's history of the Jews of Vas county expanded Zipser's history of Rohonc by taking into account the relationship between urban communities like Rohonc and the Jews living in the surrounding countryside.

Despite a broader range and higher quality of historical research, the seminary historians continued the efforts of their predecessors to prove Hungarian Jewry worthy of its recent emancipation by emphasizing its progressive and magyarizing tendencies. In addition, in their celebration of the economic success and cultural enlightenment of Hungarian Jewry, these historians explained the spread and persistence of Orthodoxy as the great exception to the rule, attributing the movement's success to economic backwardness and proximity to Poland.²⁰

Although the rise of anti-Semitism after World War I, along with a radically new political and social context, shifted the focus of Hungarian Jewish historiography, interwar historians continued to defend the "Hungarianness" of Hungarian Jewry. In the face of growing accusations by anti-Semites that Hungarian Jews were not truly Hungarian, these historians emphasized the antiquity and continuity of Jewish life in Hungary. They contrasted the successful assimilation of Jews in Trianon Hungary with the absence of assimilation among the Jews of Slovakia, Transylvania, and the Subcarpathian Rus; in other words, Jews who now lived in countries other than Hungary.²¹

Much of the interwar historical literature on Hungarian Jewry reflects the intensity of this debate, sometimes with surprising results. Some historians, in order to show that most Hungarian Jews are foreigners and not truly Hungarian, exaggerated the size and duration of the wave of immigration from Galicia. In response, some Jewish historians attempted to show that Jewish settlement in Hungary coincided with or even antedated the arrival of the Magyars by defending the quixotic notion that Hungarian Jews were descendants of Khazars who migrated to the Danubian Basin in the tenth century with the original Magyar settlers. Ironically, as Walter Pietsch showed, it was the anti-Semitic historian Alajos Kovács who proved statistically that Galician immigration was much smaller than it had been presumed.²²

No less understandable than the overpowering patriotic current in Hungarian Jewish historiography is the emergence of an Orthodox counter-current that emphasized Hungarian Orthodoxy's struggle to defend traditional Judaism against the assaults of assimilation, enlightenment, and emancipation. As the Dualist Period marked the entry of Jews into the mainstream of Hungarian society, it also marked the rise of Hungarian Orthodoxy, the most concerted attempt to resist this process and to limit its effects. Although a minority movement in all parts of Hungary except the Northeast, the Orthodox Community was assured of survival by official state recognition in 1870. Historians from within the Orthodox community defended the rise of Hungarian Orthodoxy. Although such defenses were for the most part pedestrian efforts by amateur historians, they reinforced the focus on the post-1867 period.²³

The upshot is that Hungarian Jewish history has been told largely in terms of its two diametrically opposed responses to the possibilities of the nineteenth century. This historiographic tendency is not unique to Hungary. In general, contemporary Jewish historiography has tended to focus on the ends of the spectra of Jewish identity, that is, the most assimilated and the most insular, the most and least religiously traditional, and the most and least nationalistic. Examining the actions and beliefs of these clusters of Jews is vital not least of all because they played a disproportionately decisive role in the transformation of European Jewry. No less important, however, are the experiences of the majority of European Jews, who articulated no ideology

to justify their beliefs and actions, who may or may not have joined one or more movements for any number of pragmatic or ideological reasons. These Jews steered clear of extreme responses to the challenges of the nineteenth century, preferring instead to pick and choose between a growing array of possibilities rather than champion one and impugn the rest.

This tendency has accompanied European Jewish historiography since its inception a century and a half ago, and resurfaced during the last two decades as a major source of disagreement among modern Jewish historians. Whether placing their inquiry in a continental context or setting each Jewish community in a regional or national context, historians have emphasized the centrality of emancipation and enlightenment in the transformation of European Jewry.²⁴

The first generation of modern Jewish historians was comprised largely of German-Jewish scholars who participated in the European and Jewish Enlightenment movements and often personally took part in the struggle for civic equality. Thus they placed cultural enlightenment and political emancipation squarely at the center of the modern Jewish experience. The ensuing generation of Jewish historians, which was centered in the Russian Empire by the beginning of the twentieth century, added a social and political dimension to this cultural and intellectual foundation. This generation regarded the historical experiences of German and Russian Jews as two poles of a dual paradigm for European Jewry as a whole. This dual paradigm contrasted the erosion of Jewish identity in Western and Central Europe through acculturation and integration, with the survival of Jewish ethnic solidarity in Eastern Europe as shown by the survival of traditional Jewish life or the emergence of re-invigorated forms of Jewish identity, specifically, Zionism or some form of diaspora Jewish nationalism.²⁵

This dual paradigm entered its heyday in the writings of Simon Dubnow a century ago, and, more recently, found renewed expression in the work of the late Professor Jacob Katz. In *Out of the Ghetto*, Katz asserted that emancipation and the encounter with cultural enlightenment were disruptive events in the development of European Jewry, setting in motion a tendency toward uniformity that overshadowed local variations. Jews across Europe, Katz argued, lost their corporate autonomy and the cultural insularity it provided, and faced

a common set of new expectations from the states that had emancipated them.²⁶

The appearance of *Out of the Ghetto* prompted the publication of a number of monographs from the late 1970s through the late 1980s that emphasized the diversity of European Jewry and reconsidered the matter of German Jewry as the archetypical Jewish community by placing the course of emancipation and enlightenment into a more eclectic framework.²⁷ These monographs distinguished between the protracted struggle for emancipation in German Central Europe and the sudden emancipation of French Jews, and set both in sharp contrast to the gradual social emancipation of Jews in England. They explained the diverging spectra of religious identity and affiliation among Jews by referring to broader social and demographic trends. The growing debate between Katz and his critics culminated in the convening of three conferences during the 1980s and early 1990s, each of which produced a collection of essays: *Toward Modernity, Assimilation and Community*, and *Paths of Emancipation*.²⁸

Toward Modernity, presided over by Katz, was convened with the goal of rethinking the historical experience of German Jewry as a continental paradigm for European Jewry. With the exception of one paper that rejected outright the paradigmatic character of the German-Jewish experience, others identified the indirect or direct influence of German Jewry on Jews in Bohemia, Hungary, France, Trieste, Galicia, and the Russian Empire. The second conference, *Assimilation and Community*, challenged more directly the “east–west bipolarity of the Dubnow–Katz tradition.” It recast European Jewry as a tapestry of Jewish communities from England to Russia, each following a unique path from the corporate world of the Middle Ages to the rapidly changing world of the nineteenth century.²⁹ The essays presented at this conference probed beyond questions of emancipation and enlightenment to examine the behavior of individual Jews against the background of political and cultural change. These essays placed greater emphasis on the way in which individual Jews synthesized old and new behavior patterns. They examined, furthermore, broader social trends such as acculturation, secularization, and assimilation, downplayed emancipation and enlightenment as the primary forces transforming European Jewry.

The editors of *Paths of Emancipation*, uncomfortable with the “fragmentation and de-centering of emancipation” that had emerged from *Assimilation and Community* but unwilling to return to Katz’s model of continental uniformity, searched for an alternative between these two positions. In the end, the conclusions reached at this conference, while reiterating Katz’s argument for the overriding impact of emancipation, argued nonetheless that the course of emancipation varied significantly from nation to nation, and insisted that similarities and differences among the various Jewish communities of Europe are best understood, at least with regard to emancipation, on a national level.³⁰

In short, the last two decades have seen the appearance of revisionist scholarship that has broadened the discussion of emancipation by considering factors other than legal status. Nonetheless, emancipation remains a central dividing line in European Jewish history. Whether by referring to a sudden act of legislation, a gradual process of social acceptance, or affiliation with a political movement, historians still divide European Jewry primarily between those Jews who obtained civic equality—by whatever means—and embraced some form of cultural enlightenment, and those who did neither.

Recently, the tendency to emphasize distinctions between assimilated and traditional Jews has come under scrutiny in a growing scholarly effort to reconsider the conventional taxonomy of European Jewish history in a broader, often non-Ashkenazic context. This reconsideration has been termed by one scholar the “de-ashkenazification” of modern Jewish historiography.³¹ It has been undertaken both from the standpoint of religious continuity, by historians examining the “selective and pragmatic maintenance of tradition,”³² and from the viewpoint of innovation by scholars exploring the ways in which Jews endeavored “to re-conceive the tradition in such a way that it became invulnerable to modernity [in order to] preserve continuity and prevent rupture.”³³ Even such elemental categories as urban and rural have come under scrutiny by historians who are not content “simply to point to the rural–urban distinction as an explanation for the persistence of traditional Jewish practices in Jewish village society and their erosion in an urban environment,” and who prefer “to explore the ways in which city Jews selectively retained links to aspects of

Jewish tradition that prevailed among village Jews, even as they routinely deemed most of these practices inappropriate to the demands of urban society.”³⁴ In short, the once dominant monolith of Jewish modernization that focuses on emancipation, assimilation, and enlightenment may be giving way to an approach that tells the story of many European Jews—perhaps the majority—who lived, in the words of Michael Stanislawski, “with one foot in the world of tradition and the other outside of it, striving—at times tentatively, at times stridently, more often than not unselfconsciously—to reconcile the way of life of their parents with the attractions and challenges of modern existence.”³⁵

The Jews of Miskolc were among this latter group, opting for a combination of moderate traditionalism and moderate innovation. Like thousands of Jews who lived between the extremes of Orthodoxy and assimilation, they lived with one foot in a world of cultural enlightenment and economic prosperity and the other in a world of religious tradition. Yet the Jews of Miskolc have been largely overshadowed by a prevailing polarized image of Hungarian Jewry that delineates sharply between those who embraced the benefits of enlightenment, emancipation, and assimilation and those who rejected them.

Until recently, this tendency was no less prominent among historians of Hungarian Jewry, owing largely to a paucity of easily accessible primary source material and a limited number of original secondary sources. Primary sources on the pre-1867 period, though abundant, are mainly archival. Recent publications such as György Haraszti’s helpful directory of Jewish-related sources in the archives of Hungary make these archival sources easier to locate.³⁶

In contrast to the abundance of primary sources is a shortage of recent secondary sources. To be sure, the works of the late Alexander Scheiber, the late Péter Hanák, Viktor Karády, Vera Bácskai, and other historians in post-war Budapest; Nathaniel Katzburg, Michael Silber, and the late Jacob Katz in Jerusalem; as well as Catherine Horel, and the late William McCagg, comprise a substantial pool of secondary sources. Nevertheless, Hungarian Jewish historiography has only partially recovered from the tragic destruction of Hungarian Jewry a half-century ago. Many of the books and articles published

before the war are still the definitive works on the subject they discuss.

Katzburg, Silber, and Katz, in particular, have taken the first steps toward reclaiming overlooked areas of Hungarian Jewish history. More than two decades ago, Katzburg emphasized the importance of the first half of the nineteenth century in understanding the post-emancipation period.³⁷ Silber and Katz provided a fresh periodization of the cultural and religious development of Hungarian Jewry. Silber contrasted the polarized character of the post-1867 period with the fluid character of traditional Judaism that prevailed in Hungary prior to the 1860s. Silber and Katz showed how the emergence and spread of Orthodoxy in Hungary, conventionally dated back to the arrival of Moses Sofer in Pressburg at the beginning of the nineteenth century, in fact took place a generation later.³⁸ These important steps notwithstanding, there is still much left to be done. The revival of Jewish culture and scholarship that began after the recent fall of communism produced, among other things, a renewed interest in the study of Hungarian Jewish history. This cultural renaissance is spawning a generation of historians with the linguistic capabilities and immediate access to archival sources to revitalize this sorely neglected area of Jewish history.³⁹

Ironically, the first century of Hungarian Jewish historiography inadvertently prepared the ground to reexamine mid-range towns like Miskolc as corrective case studies. Inadvertently, because, while Hungarian Jewish historians focused on demonstrating their devotion to the Magyar cause by focusing on Budapest, their background and personal situation led them in other directions. The more prominent Hungarian Jewish scholars, who lived by and large in Budapest, opted for more prestigious fields of Jewish studies such as Biblical and Rabbinic literature over history. Those who chose to study Jewish history were often rabbis in mid-range communities who, isolated from the centers of Jewish scholarship, wrote a history of their local communities using archival sources, thus creating a sweeping collection of communal histories. The first history of the Jewish community of Miskolc, in fact, was written by the local rabbi in 1904.⁴⁰ These local studies are useful starting points for revisiting the imbalances in Hungarian Jewish historiography. A first step in this direction is Miskolc.

Notes

- 1 "Miskolczer ung. Israelitische Verein für Wohlthätigkeit und Fortschritt" in *Ben Chananja* 8 (1867), p. 349.
- 2 Israel Bartal, "From Traditional Bilingualism to National Monolingualism," in Lewis Glinert, ed., *Hebrew in Ashkenaz: a Language in Exile* (New York, 1993), pp. 142–143.
- 3 Occupational profile according to censuses.
- 4 C. A. Macartney, "Hungary," in Albert Goodwin, ed., *The European Nobility in the Eighteenth Century* (New York, 1967).
- 5 Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, "Foreword," in Elisheva Carlebach, *The Pursuit of Heresy: Rabbi Moses Hagiz and the Sabbatean Controversies* (New York, 1990), xii
- 6 Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," in *The Frontier in American History* (New York, 1896), p. 1.
- 7 Ignaz Einhorn, *Die Revolution und die Juden in Ungarn* (Leipzig, 1851, reprinted Budapest, 2001), p. 54.
- 8 Michael Silber, "A Jewish Minority in a Backward Economy: an Introduction," in Silber, ed., *Jews in the Hungarian Economy, 1760–1945* (Jerusalem, 1992), p. 9
- 9 Haym Soloveitchik, "Rupture and Reconstruction: the Transformation of Modern Orthodoxy" *Tradition* 28:4 (1994) p. 66; Menachem Friedman, "Haredim Confront the Modern City," *Studies in Contemporary Jewry* 2 (1986) p. 75.
- 10 Viktor Karády, "Religious Divisions, Socio-Economic Stratification, and the Modernization of Hungarian Jewry after the Emancipation," in Silber, ed., *Jews in the Hungarian Economy, 1760–1945*, p. 163.
- 11 Edward Fram, *Ideas Face Reality: Jewish Life in Poland, 1550–1655* (Cincinnati, 1997), p. 67.
- 12 Paula Hyman made a similar observation about women's roles in an immigrant setting, noting: "One of the consequences of immigration, therefore, was the heightened centrality of mothers within the home." Hyman, "Culture and Gender: Women in the Immigrant Jewish Community," in David Berger, ed., *The Legacy of Jewish Migration: 1881 and Its Impact* [hereinafter Hyman, "Culture and Gender"] (New York, 1983), p. 163.
- 13 Ruth Kestenberg-Gladstein, "Differences of Estates within Pre-Emancipation Jewry," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 5 (1964), p. 158.
- 14 Moshe Rosman, *The Lord's Jews: Magnate-Jewish Relations in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth during the Eighteenth Century*, (Hereinafter Rosman, *The Lord's Jews*) (Cambridge, 1990).
- 15 Walter Pietsch, "A magyar vidéki zsidóság fejlődésirányzatai" *Múlt és jövő* (2003/3) p. 2 (on-line version).
- 16 Michael Silber, "The Entrance of Jews into Hungarian Society," in Jonathan Frankel and Steven J. Zipperstein, eds. *Assimilation and Community: The Jews in Nineteenth Century Europe* (Cambridge, 1992) p. 285.

- 17 Nathaniel Katzburg, "Ha-Historiografia ha-Yehudit be-Hungariya" [Jewish Historiography in Hungary] Bar Ilan, especially pp. 14–20 on Löw and 20–23 on Zipser; Zipser's study of Rohonc was published in installments in Löw's weekly German-language newspaper, Ben Chnanja as "The Fate and Course of the Israelite Community in Rechnitz" Ben Chananja (1864) pp. 347–354, 403–411, 423–426, 489–90, 527–30, 548–551, 588–91, 759–64, 788–89, 795–797, 867–69, 933–38, 958–62, 1048–54, (1865) 84–85, 100–101, 130–133.
- 18 This assertion has been a conventional element in most works on Hungarian Jewish history. See, for example, Lajos Venetianer, *A Magyar Zsidóság Története* [The History of Hungarian Jewry] (Budapest, 1922), p. 21; or, more recently, Raphael Patai, *The Jews of Hungary: History, Culture, Psychology* (Detroit, 1997), p. 11.
- 19 Katzburg, "Jewish Historiography," p. 25.
- 20 Bernát Mandl, *Die jüdische Schulwesen in Ungarn unter Kaiser Josef II (1780–1790)* (Frankfurt am Main, 1903); Béla Bernstein, *A Zsidók Története Vasmegyében, 1687–1909* [The History of the Jews in Vas County] (Szombathely, 1913).
- 21 Lajos Venetianer *A Magyar Zsidóság Története* [The History of Hungarian Jewry] (Budapest, 1922).
- 22 László Varga, "Zsidó bevándorlás Magyarországon," [Jewish Immigration in Hungary] in *Századok* (Budapest, 1992) pp. 59–79; Michael Silber, *Shorashei Ha-Pilug be-Yehadut Hungariya mimei Yoseph Ha-Sheni ad Erev Mahapechat 1848* [The Roots of the Schism in Hungarian Jewry: Social and Cultural Changes from Joseph II until the Revolutions of 1848], hereinafter Silber, *Roots of the Schism* (Jerusalem, 1985), pp. 171–187; and Walter Pietsch, "Die jüdische Einwanderung aus Galizien und das Judentum Ungarns," in *Juden in Ostmitteleuropa bis zum ersten Weltkrieg*. (Marburg/Lahn, 1989), pp. 271–293.
- 23 See, for example, Yekutiel Yehuda Greenwald, *Toizent Jahr Idish Lebn in Ungarn* (Columbus, 1945).
- 24 Jonathan Frankel, "Introduction," in Frankel and Steven Zipperstein, eds., *Assimilation and Community* (Bloomington, 1992) pp. 13–14.
- 25 Frankel, op. cit., p. 17.
- 26 Jacob Katz, *Out of the Ghetto: The Social Background of Jewish Emancipation, 1780–1870*, (New York, 1978), p. ix.
- 27 Foremost in this regard were Todd Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England: Tradition and Change in Liberal Society, 1715–1830* (Philadelphia, 1976); and Steven Zipperstein, *The Jews of Odessa, 1795–1891: A Cultural History* (Stanford, 1985).
- 28 Jacob Katz, ed., *Toward Modernity: The European Jewish Model* (New Brunswick, 1986); Frankel and Zipperstein eds., *Assimilation and Community*; Pierre Birnbaum and Ira Katznelson, eds., *Paths of Emancipation: Jews, States, and Citizenship* (Princeton, 1995).
- 29 The quote is from Birnbaum, "Introduction," *Paths of Emancipation*, pp. 19–20.
- 30 Birnbaum and Katznelson, *Paths of Emancipation*, p. 11.
- 31 I borrow this term from David Sorkin, "The Port Jew: Notes Toward a Social Type," *Journal of Jewish Studies* I:1 p. 87.

- 32 Harvey E. Goldberg, "Religious Responses among North African Jews in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," in Jack Wertheimer, *The Uses of Tradition: Jewish Continuity in the Modern Era* (New York, 1992), p. 121.
- 33 Michael A. Meyer, "Tradition and Modernity Reconsidered," Wertheimer, op. cit., p. 467.
- 34 Paula E. Hyman, "Traditionalism and Village Jews in 19th Century Western and Central Europe: Local Persistence and Urban Nostalgia," in Wertheimer, op. cit., p. 192.
- 35 Michael Stanislawski, *For Whom Do I Toil: A. D. Gordon and the Transformation of Russian Jewry* (Hanover, 1986), p. 5.
- 36 György Haraszti, *Magyar Zsidó levéltári repertórium: házai levéltárak* [Directory of archival holdings relating to Hungarian Jewry: Hungarian archives] (Budapest, 1993).
- 37 Nathaniel Katzburg, "Changes in Hungarian Jewry in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century," (Hebrew) Bar-Ilan Annual II (1964) p. 164.
- 38 See Katz, *Ha-Kera Shelo Nitacha: P'risbat Ha-Ortodaxim Mi-klal ha-Kehilot be-Hungaria u-ve-Germania* [The Breach That Would Not Mend: the Secession of Orthodox Jews from the Jewish Communities in Germany and Hungary] (Hereinafter Katz, *The Breach That Would Not Mend*) (Jerusalem, 1995); Katz, "Towards a Biography of the Hatam Sofer" in Francis Malino and David Sorkin, eds., *From East to West: Jews in a Changing Europe, 1750–1870*, (London, 1990) pp. 223–266. Professor Katz's personal recollections of his childhood are no less insightful in Katz, *With My Own Eyes*, (Jerusalem, 1994), especially pp. 1–84. Silber examined the spread of Haskalah and Reform into Hungary, and the beginnings of Hungarian Orthodoxy in Silber, *Roots of the Schism*.
- 39 This shortage of secondary sources was noted over a century ago by Joseph Bergl, and, more recently by Raphael Patai, *The Jews of Hungary*, p. 3.
- 40 Solomon Spira, *A miskolci hitközség története* [History of the Miskolc Community] (Miskolc, 1904).

*Eighteenth Century Pastoral:
The Allures and Uncertainties of the
Hungarian Frontier*

In 1844, during his first visit to Miskolc, Sándor Petőfi, the Hungarian poet laureate and a hero of the Revolution of 1848, captured the character of Miskolc as a terminus for migrants in search of a new home: “I stand at a crossroads, where am I heading? Does this road lead me to the east, or am I going west?” Like Petőfi’s early odyssey, the Miskolc Jewish community began as a stopping point for Moravian and Polish Jews migrating to Hungary. Like Petőfi’s renown, moreover, Miskolc Jewry was relatively insignificant at the beginning of the nineteenth century, but emerged as one of the most important Jewish communities in Hungary by the end of the nineteenth century.

The growth of Miskolc Jewry was uneven, and can be divided into three phases. For a century after the first Jewish immigrants arrived during the 1720s, Miskolc Jewry grew steadily but slowly. From 9 households totaling 36 Jews in 1736, the community increased to 23 households totaling 127 people in 1768, 70 households in 1784, and 389 people by 1828. Most of these Jews had limited resources; in 1748 and 1768, a single Jewish taxpayer covered 95% of the community’s tax obligation.¹

From 1828 to 1880, Miskolc Jewry experienced its most rapid rate of increase, reaching 1,096 by 1837, 2,937 by 1848, 4,770 by 1869, and 5,117 by 1880. From 1840 to 1869, Miskolc Jewry grew at five times the rate of the overall population of Miskolc; Jews comprised four percent of the population in 1840 and more than twenty percent by 1869. This pace of growth is even more pronounced if one takes into

account the concurrent emergence of a large Jewish community in Hejőcsaba, the small town adjacent to Miskolc, whose residents participated in the commercial and social life of Miskolc. The Jewish population of this small market-town located only nine kilometers from Miskolc, nearly tripled during the 1830s and reached 1,280 by 1837. The combined Jewish population of Miskolc and Hejőcsaba was 2,376 people in 1837, not including Jews who resided in the two towns illegally. After 1880, Miskolc Jewry increased but at a diminishing rate, doubling between 1880 and 1910, peaking at population of 10,291—21% of the total population. Subsequently the population remained stable until the destruction of Miskolc Jewry in 1944.²

The varied rate of growth of Miskolc Jewry was indicative of a frontier town during a period of settlement. Miskolc was situated in a remote location with respect to the more established parts of Hungary and the Habsburg Monarchy. Like other frontiers, this region was repopulated and rebuilt from scratch during the eighteenth century by ruling elites who hoped, in the words of Gregory H. Nobles, “to attract the right kind of settlers: sturdy, stable, hard workers, who would improve the land and land values and produce a marketable commodity. They also wanted settlers who would pay proper respect to the position of the large landowners.”³ In Miskolc and its environs, this meant attracting settlers who would expand commerce and increase the urban population in a way that would best serve the interests of the magnates.

The slow growth of the Jewish community of Miskolc during the eighteenth century, and the accelerating growth thereafter were the result of four factors that combined to entice or deter Jewish settlers. First, living conditions in Miskolc were harsh and primitive until the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The town lacked the infrastructure found in more developed cities and towns, even such basic amenities as a sewage system and traversable roads. These conditions improved after the Cholera Epidemic of 1831, attracting more Jews, but remained inferior to other cities until the last quarter of the nineteenth century, especially Pest.

Second, the right of Jews to settle in Miskolc was unclear during the eighteenth century, a telling reflection of the town’s ill-defined and fluctuating status. Until the end of the eighteenth century gov-

ernment administration in Miskolc was a tangled and convoluted web of royal, county, noble, and clerical officials, none of which were able to guarantee protection to would-be Jewish settlers. Third, until the end of the eighteenth century the local economy was monopolized by Christian merchants from the Balkans and Christian artisans from Hungary and German lands; opportunities for Jews and other newcomers, although expanding, were limited and remained uncertain until the 1820s. The declining dominance of Balkan merchants, coupled with the growing opportunities for Jews as artisans thenceforth encouraged more Jews to settle. Finally, prior to the 1820s, the town lacked even the barest Jewish communal institutions.

Until the 1820s, these deterrents narrowed the type of Jews that would settle in Miskolc, that is, those with an entrepreneurial spirit who were willing to endure harsh living conditions and forego an established Jewish community in exchange for the promise of commercial success. By the same token, the accelerating growth of the Jewish community after 1828 reflected the extent to which these deterrents diminished during the nineteenth century, encouraging a broader spectrum of Jews to settle in Miskolc. The rise of the Jewish community of Miskolc is thus rooted in the transformation of the town from a tumultuous boomtown during the eighteenth century into a more-developed town by the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

The town of Miskolc is located approximately 150 kilometers northeast of Budapest. According to the oldest Miskolc document, a communal chronicle from 1173, the first Magyars to inhabit the area settled in 993 C.E., when the leader of the Magyar clans presented the "area where the Sajó floods" to the head of the Miskolc clan. Like many Hungarian towns, Miskolc lies along a river, the Sajó, which originates in Slovakia and empties into the Tisza. Two tributaries of the Sajó, the Pecze and the Szinva, break off in the Diósgyőr Valley and run directly through the center of Miskolc before emptying into the Sajó. Since 1729 Miskolc has been the county seat of Borsod county, an interior county situated at the northern end of the Great Plain that traverses central Hungary. Miskolc is thus a juncture between the Great Hungarian Plain, the Slovak Highlands, and the Northeastern corner of the kingdom that was separated from Galicia by the Carpathian Mountains.⁴

Travelers and others contemporary observers had conflicting impressions of Miskolc. Some commented on the robustness of Miskolc and its environs, noting that “few cities are prettier and laden with such diverse charm,” or, further:

The friendly Sajó Valley spans the horizon like a giant basin into whose lap the winding silver streams glisten in the morning light. Here there are flowing streams, wooded mounts, fertile plains, rousing wine, famous bread, good water, and sweet air; in a word: from such gifts of nature there is enough to create paradise.⁵

Other observers commented on the importance of Miskolc as a local and regional center of trade. They described the commercial vibrance that emanated from “disorder of the market square, the noise, and the unruliness of locust-like swarming fish wives and grain traders.”⁶ More sober observers attributed this vibrance to the network of mills in the center of town that were supported by the Pecze and the Szinva streams, the five state fairs that the town hosted annually, and the twice-weekly market days where merchants traded predominantly wool from the Great Plain and wine from the neighboring Tokaj region. They also noted that the main road of the town, The Pest–Kassa highway, lay along the trade route between Kassa in the Slovakian Highlands and Pest. This road, along with easy access to the Sajó River, made Miskolc an important year-round trading center linking the Highlands and the Great Plain to Pest and western Hungary. Ferenc Kazinczy summarized Miskolc’s role as a commercial hub in 1831: “As far as Gömör, the road to Miskolc is full of wagons going to the markets of Miskolc to sell their wares.”⁷

The town’s commercial importance led nineteenth century journalists to rate Miskolc as “one of the most important cities in Hungary” along with Pest and Debrecen. The town attracted its share of visiting dignitaries. Prominent figures in Hungarian politics and culture visited Miskolc at some point, including István Széchenyi, Lajos Kossuth, and Mór Jókai. Several key figures in the development of Hungarian liberalism and nationalism such as Ferenc Kazinczy, László Palóczy, Baron Joseph Eötvös, and Bertalan Szemere lived in Miskolc for an extended period of time. In addition, Tsar Alexander I visited there in 1821, and Habsburg Emperor Franz Joseph visited in 1857.⁸

At the same time, living conditions in Miskolc were, for the most part, primitive until the last quarter of the nineteenth century. For several centuries, Miskolc had been part of the battleground between Habsburg and Ottoman armies, and between the Habsburg Crown and Hungarian revolutionary movements. The town was razed to the ground at least once in every century, precluding serious urban development in Miskolc during the Middle Ages. During the reign of King Mátyás Corvinus in the late fifteenth century, the city had showed the beginnings of urban life. This brief resurgence had come to an abrupt end during the wars of religion, as Catholics and Protestants collided on the Great Hungarian Plain. The disruption caused by the Turkish invasion followed soon after, and climaxed when the Turks occupied the city in 1560. In 1705, Miskolc was a temporary headquarters for Ferenc Rákóczi during his rebellion against the Habsburgs.⁹

The centuries of war and recurring revolts left Miskolc, like much of Central Hungary, under-developed well into the nineteenth century. Traveling in this region was often hazardous. Ber Bolechow—a Polish Jew who traveled and traded extensively in Hungary during the 1740s and 1750s—fearing an attack from highwaymen, hired Swabian wagon drivers from Transylvania to transport his wares and protect him on his way to Tarczal and Miskolc.¹⁰

A century later, Elek Fényes, the Hungarian surveyor and statistician, described in 1851 how the Pecze and the Szinva flooded the eastern end of town every the winter and spring, leaving the streets and roads impassable by foot or by carriage. Affluent residents avoided the problem by settling in the far end of the town. The months of rain were followed by gusting winds that blanketed the town with dust and dirt during the summer months. Fényes also noted the disparity between the well-built houses of the newer side and the decrepit thatch houses, mud-lined streets, and narrow courtyards of the older side. According to Fényes, the main roads of the town were well paved and well lit, but all others remained dangerous at night and virtually impassable at all times.¹¹

As late as 1878, Miskolc was regarded as one of the most unhygienic Hungarian cities, even by the standards of the time. Its cramped streets, congested without drainage, musty, watery flats were always fertile ground for the seeds of infection. Hospital records from

1856–1899 show that children under 10 were almost never brought to the hospital, and the sick among proper citizens by and large sought medical care only at the very end of the nineteenth century. In 1880, 61% of those cared for in the hospital were servants, day laborers, beggars, soldiers, and prostitutes.¹²

Between throne and altar

The inability of the Miskolc populace to improve their living conditions was due, in large part, to the poorly-defined status of the town, which undermined attempts at improving local administration.¹³ Unlike most towns in Hungary, until 1848 Miskolc was neither a magnate-controlled market town (*mezőváros*) nor a privileged free city (*szabad királyi város*), but a hybrid of the two. In 1365 King Lajos I had designated Miskolc a royal market town, which gave local magnates substantial influence in municipal affairs. In 1405, noble influence was curtailed when the denizens of the town secured the status of a *koronai város*, or crown city. This status was renewed by Mátyás Corvinus in 1471, Ferdinand I in 1563, Rudolph I in 1593, and Leopold I in 1703.

By placing Miskolc under the direct administration of the royal treasury, moreover, the crown city status made the town more dependent on the support of the royal crown than were royal free cities. It protected the residents of Miskolc from invading Turkish armies, from the land-hungry Bishop of neighboring Diósgyőr, who claimed the town as a *püspöki város*, or episcopal town; and from the intrusion of local magnates. Chartered towns like Miskolc, whose burghers owed their privileged status to a patent from the royal crown, became—at least ostensibly—a Habsburg foothold in Hungary and a political counterweight against the nobility.¹⁴

Until the mid-eighteenth century, Habsburg monarchs assisted towns like Miskolc in an effort to stimulate urban development. To this end, in 1703 Leopold I repaid the 41,000 forints that Miskolc owed the Polish King John Sobieski, and then allowed the town twenty-five years to pay him back. In 1711, Charles III extended the grace period on the loan by eight years. Royal economic support

helped Miskolc to recover economically and to acquire a deeper sense of loyalty and obligation to the royal crown.¹⁵

While not the same as a royal free city, crown city status entitled the burghers of Miskolc certain privileges, including the right to exclude Jews *de non tolerandis judeus*. In exchange, the burghers of Miskolc pledged their loyalty to the king and agreed to pay taxes and provide him with conscripts. At the same time, the burghers were less able to resist encroachment by local magnates, including those whose patronage allowed Jews to settle over the objections of the city council.

As a result, until 1840 the Jewish population of Miskolc increased more quickly than that of most royal free cities. After 1840, when the National Diet barred royal free cities from excluding Jews, the disparity between the number of Jews in Miskolc and royal free cities diminished rapidly.¹⁶ This small but steady influx of Jews into Miskolc during the eighteenth century, despite royal support for the burghers of Miskolc, marked the emergence of the magnates as the predominant element in county politics, the blurring boundary between city and county politics, and the growing dependence of Jews on the magnates.

The emergence of the magnates as a distinct caste within the nobility had singular importance for the development of Hungary and, in particular, its frontier region. In theory, all noblemen regardless of status and wealth had the same legal rights and obligations that dated back to the Golden Bull of 1222 and were reaffirmed by the *Tripartitum* of 1514 and again by the National Diet in 1608. Foremost among these rights was the right not to be taxed and to participate and vote in the deliberations of the county diet.¹⁷

By the mid-eighteenth century, though, the equality of nobles was largely a legal anachronism. The nobles themselves divided into upper, middle, and lower strata, distinguished from each other not only by wealth but also by lifestyle, culture, and political outlook. The highest stratum was an elite made up of the wealthiest and most powerful families. The *Tripartitum* prohibited special titles to all noblemen; nonetheless, most of these elite families had been conferred by the Habsburg Monarch in his capacity as Holy Roman Emperor aristocratic titles such as count, baron, and, in the case of the Esterházys, prince. These elite families owned and controlled most of the market towns in Hun-

gary. In Borsod County thirteen elite families had at least one member: the Coburg, Almásy, Andrassy, Csáky, Erdődy, Gyulay, Károlyi, Keglevich, Serényi, Vay, Dessewffy, and Szirmay families.¹⁸

The middle nobility was larger and more amorphous than the magnate elite. This diverse group included the *bene possessionati* and other propertied nobles. These noblemen lived a rural, parochial life that was more like that of their peasants than like that of magnates. They farmed their own land, gambled, drank, and seldom strayed beyond the borders of their own small estates.¹⁹

The lower stratum included nobles with small estates, so-called “seven plum tree” nobles (*bétszilvafás nemes*) nobles; and impoverished “sandalized” nobles (*bocskoros nemes*), who could barely afford proper footwear. Many lived as parasites in a nearby town or as sharecroppers on the estate of a more affluent nobleman. These were the only nobles forced to pay taxes.²⁰

The growing influence of magnates in Miskolc began in earnest in 1729, when Miskolc was named the county seat of Borsod county. Previously the noblemen who lived there had come as refugees from the Ottoman Wars, many with limited resources and without official position. When Miskolc became the county seat, the prominent noblemen who held the leading county offices resided there. Most important among them were the deputy sheriff (*alispán*), the chief and deputy chief-magistrates (*főszolgabírók* and *alszolgabírók*) and other local magistrates (*táblabírók*). In addition to county officials, magnates and upper-nobles who owned towns and villages adjacent to Miskolc exercised greater influence, most notably the Boldisárs, who owned Csaba, the Szirmays and Vays, who owned Ónod, and the Dőrys, who owned Felsőzsolca.²¹

The growing presence of magnates in Borsod County who had interests elsewhere blurred the lines between town and county, allowing Jews increased access to the otherwise inaccessible town. According to the 1736 Census, the first permanent Jewish households in Miskolc were under the aegis of these magnate families, six out of nine under the Boldisárs and Dőrys. This initial influx of Jews, while minuscule, set a tone for Jewish settlement in Miskolc for the rest of the eighteenth century: henceforth, the size and pace of Jewish settlement would increase in proportion to magnate patronage, itself a function

of a steadily recovering, magnate-dominated county government. Beginning in the late 1720s, magnate-sponsored Jews set up stalls at the market in Miskolc, then purchased a warehouse and temporary dwelling, and eventually settled permanently. Most of these initial settlers were immigrants from Moravia, part of a larger wave that replenished the Jewish population of Hungary during the eighteenth century.

This influx was stirred initially by the *Familiantengesetz*, or Familiants Law, that Charles III issued in 1726 for the Jews of the Bohemia and Moravia as a way of regulating the growth of the Jewish population. The Familiants Law fixed the size of Moravian Jewry at 40,000 and placed severe restrictions on Jewish marriages there. This decree remained in effect until 1849, and prompted a steady emigration of Jews out of Moravia which continued into the nineteenth century. The decree not only limited the size of Moravian Jewry, as the emperor had intended, but also redistributed the Jews more evenly through Habsburg lands, particularly from overpopulated Moravia to the underpopulated areas of Hungary.²²

Efforts to resettle Jews began almost immediately after the emperor issued his decree, and were spearheaded by the imperial governor of Moravia, Count Maximilian Ulrich von Kaunitz. Kaunitz shared the emperor's absolutist and mercantilistic aims, and carried them out diligently in Moravia. For Kaunitz, implementing the Familiants Law was part of a broader effort to rule Moravia more systematically; limiting the number of Jews was no less important than dredging swamps, building roads, opening a technical academy in Olmutz, and expelling gypsies.²³

Appropriately, the migration of Moravian Jews into Hungary proceeded in a remarkably orderly fashion, particularly into those Hungarian Counties controlled by a single magnate family. In such cases, Moravian and Hungarian magnates arranged for the transfer of dozens of Jews at a time from one magnate estate to the other. According to the 1736 Census, the only one that indicates the current and former magnate landlord, more than three-fourths of Moravian Jews who settled in Moson County moved from a Kaunitz possession in Moravia to a Zichy Possession in Hungary.²⁴

Kaunitz and other leading Moravian magnate families such as the Lichtensteins and the Dietrichsteins settled Jews in more than fifteen

counties of Hungary, but mainly in Nyitra and Trencsén, the two counties that bordered Moravia. A smaller number of immigrants settled in more distant Borsod County. In 1736, twenty of thirty-three Jewish households in Borsod county had relocated from one of the Kaunitz estates in Moravia, including six of the nine households that settled in Miskolc.

A shift in royal policy: the Grassalkovics Agreement

The expanding magnate patronage of Jews was furthered by diminishing royal support for chartered cities during the reign of Maria Theresa. From the moment she ascended the Habsburg throne in 1740, Maria Theresa faced a threat to the survival of her realm from the Prussian invasion. The ensuing loss of Silesia to the Prussians and the failure of Habsburg armies to recapture this territory twenty years later during the Seven Years War, convinced Maria Theresa to improve the quality of her military, which required a comprehensive array of costly reforms. Because the War of the Austrian Succession had drained the imperial treasury and the Seven Years War subsequently drained what little she had been able to replenish, she lacked the finances to fund these reforms. This ever-pressing financial concern influenced all aspects of her reign, including her relations with magnates, towns, and Jews.²⁵

Maria Theresa's initial stratagem was to offer the magnates greater control over Hungarian politics in exchange for money, recruits to fight the Prussians, and a pledge of loyalty to the dynasty. This fostered a closer relationship between the magnates and the Habsburg dynasty. Some erected palaces in Vienna, and governed their domains as absentee landlords. From the 1760s on, many magnates educated their sons at the *Theresianum*, an academy set up by Maria Theresa for this very purpose.

Until the mid-1780s, magnates generally supported Habsburg reforms and shared the Habsburg's political and administrative affinity for absolutism, mercantilism, and a physiocratic approach to agriculture.²⁶ They emulated the political and social reforms of Maria Theresa on their own domains, even while claiming at times that

these reforms violated the rights of the nobility. Thus, for example, Prince Nicolas Esterházy opposed Maria Theresa's urban reforms in 1766 in the name of opposing Habsburg intrusion, but he urged the Diet of Sopron County to accept this royal decree and implement these reforms locally.²⁷

By allowing the magnates more influence, however, Maria Theresa allowed them to undermine the charters of crown cities—Miskolc included.²⁸ Sensing that attenuated royal support would compromise their ability to stem the growing influence of Borsod County magnates, in 1744 the burghers of Miskolc borrowed 40,000 forints from Ferenc Pulszky, a prominent nobleman from neighboring Szepes county. The burghers used the loan to pay off the debt owed to local nobility, in the hope of stemming the magnate presence. Instead, they inadvertently facilitated a greater magnate presence in Miskolc. In 1751, the Dóry family completed the construction of a large, imposing residence in the center of the town, making the growing magnate presence undeniable.²⁹

During the 1750s, moreover, the financial woes of the royal treasury led Maria Theresa to call in the debt owed by Miskolc to the royal crown since the reign of Leopold I. The town offered to pay part of the debt, 1,000 gold coins. In 1755, the Empress sent Antal Grassalkovics, the President of the Royal Treasury, to negotiate for the full and immediate payment of the debt. When it became clear that the town could not pay off the debt in full, she and the town elders agreed to place the town under Grassalkovics' supervision and allow Grassalkovics to refashion the town's administrative structure, an arrangement known as the Grassalkovics Agreement.³⁰

Previously, Miskolc had been governed by a bi-annually elected chief magistrate (*főbíró*) and town council that acted, respectively, as judiciary and legislature. Grassalkovics renamed the office of chief magistrate "chief bureaucrat" (*főtisztviselő*) and placed it and the town council under the supervision of a "new landed estate" (*új földesúr*). The latter had the right to instruct the council and magistrate in all legislative and judicial affairs. In addition, the magistrate and council were elected annually. The council was not allowed to borrow money without the permission of the royal treasury. These arrangements remained in effect until 1789.³¹

Although the Grassalkovics Agreement aimed at augmenting royal influence in Miskolc, it placed the town squarely in the hands of Borsod County magnates. The new agreement did not exclude magnates from participating in local administration. The annual election of city officials made it easier for local magnates to control non-noble city officials. The new restriction on borrowing gave magnates additional economic leverage, as the town council turned more frequently to magnate lords for credit. Most important, though, leading magnate families were able to control the office of landed estate, thus having a powerful voice in city administration.³²

The nobility's enhanced influence in Miskolc further eroded the town's privileged status, reflected, among other things, by an increase in the Jewish population between 1748 and 1768. In addition, a number of magnate-sponsored Jewish artisans were allowed to practice their craft in Miskolc, despite the appeals by local Christian artisans to the royal governor's council. In 1768, Miskolc Jewry included three tailors, three tanners, two ritual slaughterers, and two goldsmiths.³³

The situation of Miskolc Jews, in fact, was a clear indication that the Grassalkovics Agreement had worked to the advantage of magnates over the royal crown. The connection between Miskolc Jews and the royal crown diminished after 1755. This attenuating connection was epitomized by the diminishing impact of the Toleration Tax.

The Toleration Tax was an annual head tax originally imposed by Maria Theresa on all Habsburg Jews in 1749. It was originally imposed as a punishment for the Jews' putative support of Bavaria during the War of the Austrian Succession. Each Jewish household was expected to pay six crowns annually, directly to the royal treasury. It was the last of a series of taxes that Maria Theresa imposed on Jews amidst the financial travails of the 1740s, and was the only Jewish policy of the Habsburgs that spanned the reign of Maria Theresa through the reign of her great-grandson, Ferdinand, who abolished it in 1846.³⁴

In general, the Toleration Tax epitomized the relationship between Jews and the Habsburgs during the age of absolutism. Like other absolutist sovereigns, Maria Theresa paid little attention to Jews other than finding ways to elicit tax revenue from them. In this regard, the Toleration Tax embodied a shift in the attitudes of the Habsburgs

from earlier monarchs whose religious disdain determined how they governed Jews into monarchs who overlooked religious differences in favor of the practical demands of the state.³⁵

Because the Toleration Tax, like other royal taxes of the 1740s, discouraged Jewish immigration, it conflicted with overall efforts to resettle Borsod County by attracting Jewish settlers. Like Maria Theresa, magnates regarded Jews with disdain but as a vital source of income. Unlike her, the magnates felt that allowing the Jews to trade more freely would enhance their economic usefulness more than taxing them more heavily. To this end, in 1743 Borsod County magnates protested a tax-increase imposed by the royal crown, fearing that such an increase would cause Jews to leave Borsod County. Later that year, they asked the royal governor to prevent military officials from imposing ad hoc taxes on Jews without royal approval.³⁶

Ultimately, the aim of these protests was to allow magnates to collect more taxes from their Jewish subjects at the expense of the royal crown. The effect of these protests is reflected by the diminishing impact of the Toleration Tax on Jews in Miskolc and Borsod County in proportion to the taxes Jews paid to magnates. According to the 1768 Census, Jews in Miskolc and Borsod County paid only 233 and 549 florins respectively to the royal crown, less than ten percent of taxes paid by Jews that year. Miskolc Jews paid three times as much to Borsod County as to the royal crown, and Borsod County Jews twice as much.

More importantly, Jews paid far more individually to magnate patrons than they paid communally to the county or to the royal crown. According to the 1768 Census, the Toleration Tax and county taxes accounted for less than one percent of taxes paid by Miskolc Jews that year. The vast majority of Jewish tax expenditures were for leasing contracts (*Arrendar Domino Suo*) that accounted for more than ninety-five percent of all Jewish taxes. The same was true, to a lesser extent, for the remainder of Borsod County, where the Toleration Tax and county taxes accounted for less than twenty percent of Jewish taxes. More than ninety percent of all taxes were paid by Jews to magnate benefactors. In some cases, a single wealthy Jewish family paid the Toleration Tax for an entire community, further minimizing its impact on the remaining Jews in the area. In Borsod county, a cer-

tain Jacob Ceizel covered the tax obligation for all Jews in the county during the 1750s.³⁷

The relatively limited burden imposed by the Toleration Tax encouraged further Jewish immigration into Hungary. Michael Silber has shown that, while the tax was theoretically apportioned evenly throughout the monarchy, Hungarian Jewry paid proportionately less than Jews of neighboring parts in the monarchy. This explains why other elements of the population protested the crown's favorable treatment of Hungarian Jews despite the putative burden of the tax.³⁸

Jews were further encouraged to immigrate to Hungary by the sense of security provided by the Toleration Tax itself. As the Toleration Tax evolved from a punitive, wartime tax into a permanent component of the Habsburg's Jewish policy, it gave Jews a lasting connection to the royal crown, and a greater sense of security, despite the stigma associated with the tax. As Maria Theresa and her successors implemented an increasingly mercantilistic fiscal policy, this annual tax revenue became an important component in her overall attempt to allow her Jewish subjects to aid the state, in accordance with the dictates of absolutism.³⁹

The comparatively lighter tax burden shouldered by Hungarian Jews gave magnates an additional incentive to relocate Jews from Moravia to Hungary. The tax tapped more deeply into the financial resources of Moravian Jews than Hungarian Jews, leaving less for Moravian magnates to collect from Jews on their estates. In Hungary, moreover, Habsburg attempts to centralize government never took root as firmly as in Moravia and other parts of the monarchy, thus the tax was never collected as efficiently in Hungary as in Moravia. In some cases Moravian magnates resettled Jews in Hungary to lessen the burden of the Toleration Tax, and then continued to collect other taxes from them. Because the royal crown's ability to impose direct taxes was less effective in Hungary than in Moravia, resettling Jews in Hungary diminished the amount of taxes Jews paid to the royal crown, leaving more revenue for magnate benefactors, thus providing magnates a kind of tax shelter. Count Kaunitz, for example, continued to collect taxes from his Jewish subjects even after they had settled in Hungary, prompting periodic protests from the Jews' Hungarian magnate benefactors.⁴⁰

Such disputes reflected much larger and more critical issues that came to the forefront during the eighteenth century. Count Kaunitz claimed that, although his Jewish subjects had crossed the border from Moravia into Hungary they remained Habsburg subjects. Thus this relocation was essentially no different than moving to a different city or county, in which case they should continue to pay taxes to him. Had this dispute not involved Hungarian territory—if, for example, the Jews in question had migrated from Moravia to Bohemia or to one of the hereditary provinces—the dispute would have been resolved with little difficulty and Kaunitz's claim most likely would have been upheld.

Hungary, though, enjoyed a unique status within the Habsburg Monarchy. As one historian noted: "The status of Hungarian lands within the Habsburg complex remained ambiguous...the indigenous political institutions and socio-economic structures, dominated by an assertive nobility, remained largely intact and continued to exercise such control as to make the assertion of royal prerogative in a manner analogous to Bohemia and Austria virtually impossible."⁴¹ Hungary was a constitutional monarchy, united to the other Habsburg provinces only through the person of the emperor, who ruled as king in Hungary while ruling as emperor everywhere else. For this reason, Kaunitz's assertion that the Jews in question had only relocated within a single sovereign state challenged Hungary's exceptional status. This dispute was left unresolved, but it anticipated the way that the status of Jews—and, in particular, their tax obligation—was a point of contention in the broader conflict between the Hungarian magnates and the Habsburg crown.

Like other absolutist rulers, the leading magnate family regarded its Jewish subjects primarily as a source of tax revenue, but also, as one historian noted, "as agents skillful in stimulating the local estate economy through a variety of activities."⁴² The magnate family's *privilegium*, or letter of privileges and obligations, to the Jewish community was, at best, a mixed blessing. It provided Jews with a sense of security, and, during the eighteenth century, laid the basis for the formation of Jewish communities in leading market towns such as in Eszterházy-controlled Mattersdorf (Nagymarton), Pálffy-controlled Rohonc, and Károlyi-controlled Nagykároly. At the same time, the *privi-*

legium restricted Jewish residence, travel, and trade, while taxing virtually every aspect of Jewish communal life.⁴³

In developing parts of Hungary such as Borsod County, as many as a dozen magnate families competed for dominance in county politics, particularly in Miskolc, the economic hub. In the absence of an established community, Miskolc and Borsod County Jews dealt individually with their magnate benefactors. Whereas relations between Sopron County Jews and the Esterházys transpired on a communal level, in more remote areas like Borsod County, these relations transpired between individual Jews and their magnate benefactor.

It is useful in this regard to compare the situation of Jews in Miskolc with Jews in Mattersdorf, the leading Jewish community in Sopron County. Jews in Mattersdorf endured the local absolutism of the Esterházy Family. In the *Privilegium* given to the Jews of Mattersdorf in Sopron County by Pál Esterházy in 1694—and renewed in 1800 by Miklós Esterházy—the Esterházys promised the Jews “our full assistance and protection” and “total freedom of movement, travel, trade, and service not only in our domains in the vicinity of Mattersdorf but in every pathway in Hungary that is part of our estate they are permitted to engage in all matters to which they have a fair connection...”⁴⁴ Miskolc Jews, too, were able to travel throughout the region. In addition, Borsod County magnates retained the right to approve the selection of Jewish leaders and clergy. In 1769, for example, magnates rejected the Jews’ choice of cantor.⁴⁵

The principle differences between Miskolc and Mattersdorf Jews had to do with commerce, taxes, occupations, and communal authority. Miskolc Jews’ advantages over Mattersdorf Jews were largely economic. Both could sell wine and other goods at the town market. Mattersdorf Jews were allowed to sell wine only in the town market on market days. Jews not officially registered with the community were not allowed to sell goods at the town market. In Miskolc, as Ber Bolechow attested, outsiders bought and sold in Miskolc seemingly at will.⁴⁶

The range of occupations permitted to the Jews of Mattersdorf was more limited than the distribution of occupations among Miskolc Jews, particularly with respect to artisans. According to the census of 1768, there were twice as many Jewish artisans in Mattersdorf than in

Miskolc although Mattersdorf had nearly five times as many Jews. Mattersdorf Jews also had to pay an annual tax of six forints to operate a ritual bath, synagogue, school and additional six forints for the cemetery. They also had to pay a graduated tax if one of their members married someone not from an Esterházy-owned town or village. There is no evidence of Miskolc Jews paying any such taxes.⁴⁷

By the end of the 1760s, the sense of security fostered by the Toleration Tax, along with the pressures of the Familiants Law, sustained the flow of Jews from Moravia into Hungary, and brought enough Jews to Borsod county to create the first signs of communal organization. In Borsod County, the Miskolc Burial Society was formed in 1767. Two years later, a seven-man executive was appointed to supervise the collection of taxes from Jews in Borsod County.⁴⁸

The most dramatic change in the balance between Jews, magnates, and chartered towns, of course, came with Joseph II's 1783 Patent of Toleration. This patent was part of Joseph II's sweeping program of political, social, and cultural reform, which was the high-point of Habsburg intrusion into Hungarian politics prior to 1848. For Jews this meant, among other things, new economic opportunities in heretofore closed commercial centers. When Joseph's successor Leopold II rescinded the reforms at the end of the 1780s, the improvements they had brought to Jews came to an abrupt end.⁴⁹

The Patent affected chartered cities and market towns differently. For the merchants and craftsmen who comprised the elite of chartered towns, the patent challenged a core privilege, and invited an influx of competitors. The reinstatement of this privilege at the end of the 1780s allowed royal free cities again to exclude Jews.⁵⁰ Although royal free cities were unsuccessful in their efforts to evict all Jews who had settled while the patent was in effect, Law 38 of 1790 gave them a partial victory by allowing only those Jews who had obtained legal residence by January 1, 1790 to remain. All other Jewish residents and would-be settlers were summarily defined as illegal aliens and subject to eviction.

Most market towns had been under the control of a magnate family for years and, in some cases, for decades, before the patent went into effect. As a rule, these magnate families welcomed Jews and anyone else who could enhance the local economy, thus the Patent's at-

tack on residential restrictions merely added a royal rubberstamp to an existing situation. The annulment of the patent removed the rubberstamp but left the more fundamental, magnate-sponsored protection intact.

In Miskolc, too, the patent had little impact, largely because the town's corporate privileges had long since been eviscerated by the Grassalkovics Agreement. In this regard, Leopold II's Patent and Law 38 of 1790 culminated more than a half-century of royal policy eroding the privileged status of chartered towns such as Miskolc, thereby enhancing the influence of local magnates.⁵¹ The upshot is that, with the exception of the handful of Jews who were allowed to remain in royal free cities under the protection of Law 38, by the end of the 1780s, the pre-1783 disparity in Jewish settlement between market towns and royal free cities remained intact in post-Josephinian Hungary.⁵²

Neither the protection of magnates, nor the reordering of city administration by the Grassalkovics Agreement, nor the waning royal support for towns led to a significant increase of Jewish population of Miskolc or Borsod County during the eighteenth century. Unbeknownst to would-be Jewish settlers, however, the ill-defined local government worked to the material advantage of Jews, Jewish communities situated in more established Western Hungarian counties where a powerful magnate family controlled much or all of the county, including the major market towns. In such cases, the family governed in the same absolutist spirit with which Habsburg sovereigns governed the monarchy, scarcely deterred by rival corporate groups or by lesser nobles, while the county diet was largely a rubberstamp for the administrative aims of the dominant magnate family.⁵³

Despite the material advantage of fewer taxes, comparatively few Jewish immigrants settled in Borsod County or Miskolc in comparison with towns in Western and Northern Hungary. This was due largely to the commercial dominance of Balkan merchants and the absence of Jewish communal infrastructure. What's more, according to the 1768 Census, the Jewish population of Borsod County was half that of Máramaros County, one-quarter that of Nyitra County, and half that of Sáros County.⁵⁴

Balkan merchants

The comparatively small number of Jewish settlers in Miskolc, even during the reign of Joseph II, was due partly to proximity; most Jews settled in counties along the Moravian–Hungarian border. It also resulted from the predominance of Balkan merchants in local commerce, which confined Jews to the lower echelons of commerce. Balkan trading companies were the oldest trading companies in eighteenth century Hungary. One of the oldest was founded in Miskolc in 1687, and was instrumental in establishing Miskolc as a key point in the wine-trade between Cracow, Poznan, and the Tokaj region in Northeastern Hungary. By 1720, there were 43 Greek merchants in Miskolc; by 1754 there were 62; by 1768, there were 89 organized into 22 independent merchant guilds.⁵⁵

These companies at times had sufficient influence to prevent Jews from settling. So few Jews settled in Miskolc that a local magistrate reported even the presence of a Jewish *commorans*, or temporary dweller, to the royal governor's office: "In the District of Miskolc there are, indeed, three Jews; In the Town of Miskolc the aforementioned *commorans* named Jacob Solomon came from Upper Poland some time ago."

Until 1772, Balkan merchants had certain commercial advantages over Jewish and other Christian merchants. Because they were considered subjects of the Ottoman Sultan and not the Hungarian royal crown, Balkan merchants had been exempt from certain taxes and tolls, and allowed to attend certain trade fairs not readily accessible to Christian merchants. Their eastern connections allowed them to import goods of superior quality from the Ottoman Empire and sell them profitably in the Habsburg Monarchy.

Nonetheless, until the 1780s, the Balkan merchants encountered limited competition in Miskolc from Jewish merchants. The Balkan trading company that dominated commerce in Miskolc regarded Jewish merchants and shopkeepers as the most serious threat to Balkan commercial dominance, and took steps to limit the Jewish presence in Miskolc:

If a store is auctioned...the former owner may not participate in the bidding in order that he not force up the price...If, however, it is a matter of Jews or

other foreigners offering a higher price at auction, all members of the company have the right to participate in the auction, and it is their duty to prevent the store from falling into Jewish or other foreign hands, so as not to allow them to worm their way in; in this way, we can safeguard our children's future.⁵⁶

For much of the eighteenth century, in fact, the focal point of competition between Jewish and Balkan merchants was not Miskolc but the neighboring market town of Diósgyőr.⁵⁷ In Miskolc, Balkan merchants and Jews engaged in complimentary forms of commerce. Balkan merchants imported raw materials and unfinished goods. Jews bought and sold finished products and second hand goods.

The one area of commerce not dominated by Balkan merchants was the wine trade. By the mid-eighteenth century this form of commerce had become the main source of income for Jewish merchants in Miskolc. As early as 1727, an edict from the Royal governor's council in Buda (*bélytartótanács*) imposed an equal custom's fee on Jewish and Balkan merchants selling wine in Borsod County, an indication of the Jewish role in this area of commerce.⁵⁸

A more vivid illustration is found in the memoirs of Ber Bolechow. Bolechow, a native of Galicia, was one of many Polish Jews who traded in Hungary. Miskolc was the western edge of his Hungarian trade route. While he never settled in Hungary, his brother was among the scores of Polish Jews who comprised one-fifth of the total number of Jewish immigrants to Hungary during the eighteenth century. He spent a considerable time in northeastern Hungary, crossing the Carpathian Mountains six times during the 1750s and 1760s and conducting business in a string of Hungarian towns from Máramaros and Miskolc across the Great Plain as far as Debrecen. Primarily, he purchased wine from one or more towns in the Tokaj Valley, and then sold it in Lwow or some other nearby town in Galicia.⁵⁹

Bolechow's memoir provides a rare first-hand account of the wine-trade, and of an early example of the economic cooperation between Jews and magnates:

We arrived in the town of Miskolcz, where my brother, Aryeh Loeb, was purchasing wine; he was staying with the *Kazin* (communal officer) R. Abraham Schpilke, a wholesale merchant, and at that time the foremost of all the

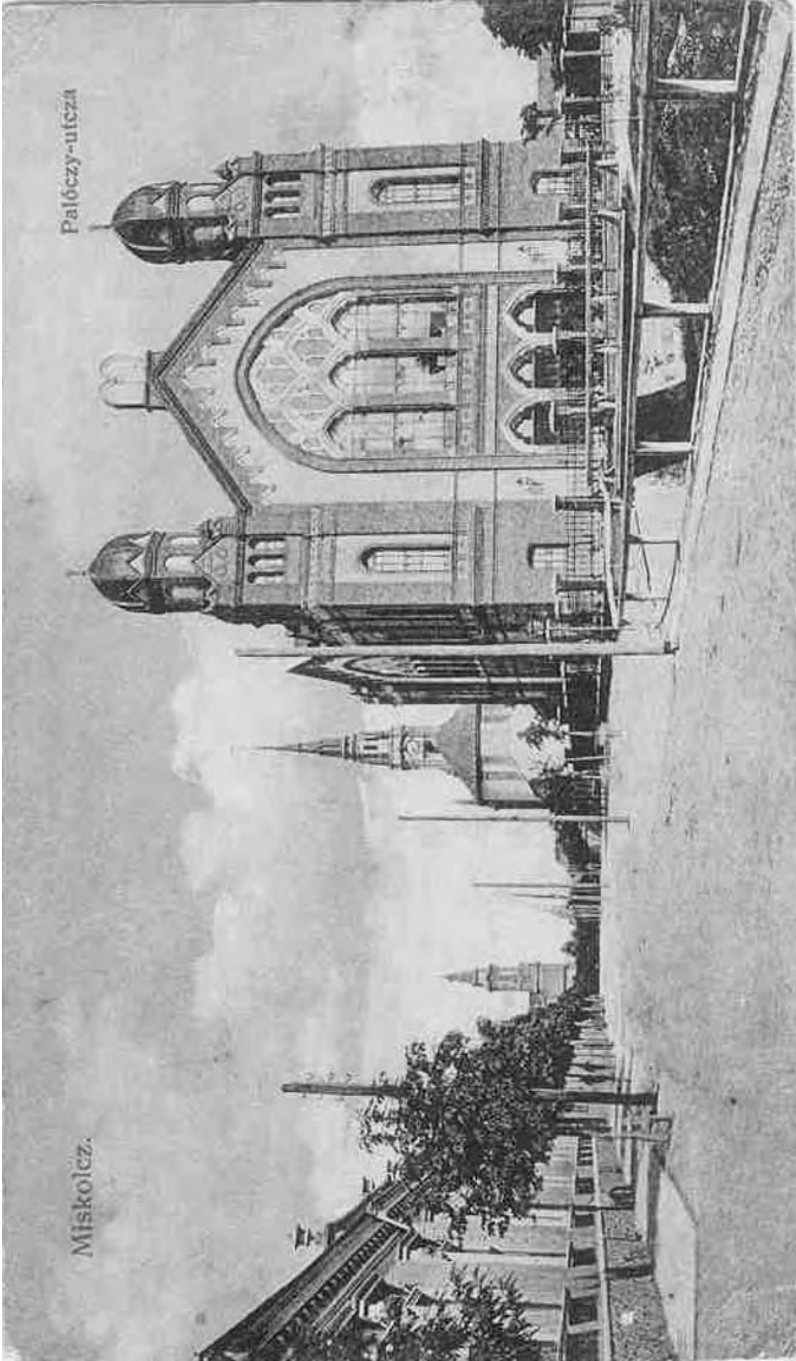
Jewish residents of Miskolcz. My brother bought all the wine he needed from Count Gvadanyi, a former officer in the Emperor's army, who in his old age lived in Miskolc... My father had heard of my brother's dealings before our arrival in Miskolcz, while we were still on our way to the place. When we arrived there he did not go to the inn in which my brother stayed, but we rode through another street and took lodging in the house of a Hungarian silversmith. The silversmith was no longer alive; his aged widow gave my father a special room... One day a cooper recognized my father and said to him: "A Hungarian noble has come to his house here in Miskolc from a long way off, from his estates in Upper Hungary... When he gets to know you as a merchant in a good way of business, he will certainly sell you good wine at a reasonable price."⁶⁰

Jews like Ber Bolechow would eventually dominate the Tokaj Valley wine trade, prompting one observer in 1791 to note how the speculations of Jewish wine merchants would determine local grain prices, and another observer in 1818 to note that the Hungarian wine and wool trades "seem to be a monopoly in [Jewish] hands."⁶¹

The lack of a community

The commercial opportunities for Jews in the wine-trade significantly enhanced the economic conditions of Jews in Miskolc and Borsod County, but apparently not enough to overcome the fact that, until the end of the eighteenth century, Miskolc lacked even the most elemental institutions. The earliest evidence of a synagogue in Miskolc dates from 1795. A second synagogue was completed in 1817, which later came to known as the Palóczy Street synagogue or, until a larger was built during the 1860s, the great synagogue.⁶²

Miskolc Jewry, moreover, had no rabbi until the 1780s. According to Solomon Spira, the chief rabbi of Miskolc at the turn of the twentieth century and the author of the first history of Miskolc Jewry, the first identifiable rabbi was Asher Anshel Weiner, who was born somewhere in the Czech lands in 1720 and died in Miskolc in 1800. This rabbi, Spira noted, "had the title of county rabbi and, in every community, the functioning rabbi was subordinate to him." In a county that had only a few hundred Jews in 1787, this was not that significant.⁶³



The synagogue on Palóczy street

Jewish schools were equally sparse until the 1780s. Other than occasional references to a *Talmud Torah* school that opened in 1734, sources pertaining to Jewish education in Miskolc prior to the 1830s are sparse.⁶⁴ The first attempt to improve the condition of Jewish education in Hungary was undertaken by Joseph II, who established a network of state-sponsored *Normalschulen* in Miskolc in 1785.⁶⁵ Like other *Normalschulen*, its curriculum appended the traditional Jewish education with instruction in practical subjects: mathematics, geography, natural science, civics, an artisanal trade, and German language and literature. The Miskolc *Normalschul* operated from 1785–1788 and had two grades. During each of the four years that the school was open, an average of twenty-one students attended the two grades, a significant number in a community of seventy families.⁶⁶ Affluent Jews did not send their children to the *Normalschul*. Jonah Falk, the highest tax-paying Jew in Miskolc, refused to send his sons to the school. Only after a state representative ordered him to send his children to the school, did he reluctantly agree.⁶⁷

As with other *Normalschulen*, local support in Miskolc was facilitated by three factors. First, the schools' primary aim had little to do with changing Jewish religious practices and beliefs. The emperor and his education ministers were far more concerned with transforming Jews into more productive subjects than changing their religious beliefs. Second, the schools provided poor and orphaned children with a superior alternative to the overcrowded and poorly run *Talmud Torah*. Third, and perhaps most important, Rabbi Ezekiel Landau of Prague, the most prominent and influential rabbinic figure in the empire, did not outright condemn the schools, but endorsed them, albeit tepidly, at the emperor's behest.⁶⁸

The Miskolc *Normalschule*, like its counterparts elsewhere in Hungary, closed alongside the collapse of the rest of the Josephinian reforms. The successes and difficulties of its brief tenure anticipated two key issues in the education debates of the 1830s and 1840s. First, just as Ezekiel Landau's imprimatur was indispensable to the success of the *Normalschulen*, subsequent efforts, whether on the communal, county, or state-wide level, would require rabbinic sanction. The four rabbis that served Miskolc during the first half of the nineteenth century—Anshel Weiner, Abraham Possulberg, Abraham Wohl, and

Moses Ezekiel Fischmann—were among the dozens of Moravian trained rabbis who comprised the bulk of the Hungarian rabbinate during this time. Although little is known about Wiener and Possulberg, historians agree that they, like Wohl and Fuschmann, came to Miskolc from Moravia, and that they either studied under Landau or one of his disciples.⁶⁹

The brief tenure of the *Normalschule* was an exception to the general absence of an organized community in Miskolc during the eighteenth century. The under-developed character of Jewish communal life was common to the entire region. During one business venture, Ber Bolechow received a desperate plea from the Jewish community of Szerencs, which lacked any kind of religious leadership, to preside over a ritual circumcision. Similarly, one observer noted as late as 1798 that few Jewish communities in the Tokaj region had rabbis, including the relatively more prosperous communities in Tarcál and Mád. Jews in the isolated towns and villages of northeastern Hungary relied on merchants like Ber of Bolechow for even the most elemental communal services.⁷⁰

In sharp contrast to more established Jewish communities in Western Hungary, moreover, Jews in Miskolc had virtually no measure of self-government. Jewish leaders in Mattersdorf, by contrast, were granted far more authority over their constituents. “Their elected officers are hereby especially empowered, and the entire Jewish population is obligated to submit to their rulings.”⁷¹ Mattersdorf Jews were also implicitly allowed to form a tribunal and adjudicate civil cases:

On the basis of these rights we establish that every personal dispute, small and large, that comes before the Jewish tribunal, at which the tribunal imposes a fine, two-thirds of the fine belongs to the [Esterházy] treasury and one-third to the Jewish communal treasury... If a Christian wants to sue a Jew he must go first to the Jewish tribunal and only if he is dissatisfied with this initial ruling can he go to the Christian court in the county capital. But if a Jew sues a Christian he must always go to the Christian court.⁷²

Miskolc Jews brought their legal suits to the local county magistrate regardless of whether the plaintiff or defendant was Christian, and even if both parties were Jews. There is no evidence of a Jewish tri-

bunal adjudicating a civil case in Miskolc during the eighteenth century.

Miskolc Jews were not given any form of communal self-government because they were neither regarded as a community by their magnate benefactors, nor did they relate to one another as a community until the late eighteenth century. Miskolc Jews coexisted largely as a loose collection of individuals who happened to live in the same town. A parallel lack of organization among the nobility of Borsod County meant that Miskolc Jews paid no special taxes other than the Habsburg-imposed Toleration Tax. There was simply no county government apparatus to impose the range of taxes that the Esterházy—the *de facto* government of Sopron County—imposed on Jews there.

The upshot is that, like other Jews on the Hungarian frontier, Miskolc Jews were not yet a community, but a group of isolated households who by happenstance found themselves in the same town. They had no corporate relationship with the state but were an amalgamation of individuals with separate relationships to a coterie of leading magnate benefactors, who, after 1790, comprised the *de facto* government of Borsod County. This situation was a symptom of the fluidity of the Hungarian frontier and the convoluted character of county politics, and would be reinforced during the ensuing decades. As magnates filled the political void left by the withdrawal of the Habsburgs from local politics, and Jews filled the economic vacuum left by the departure of the Greeks from economic leadership, the alliance between nobility and Jewry would solidify further. Yet the fluidity of magnate-Jewish relations would remain as individual magnates, imbued with a newfound desire to live more profitably and share in the new material possibilities of the turn of the nineteenth century, preferred to leave their Jews as unencumbered as the dynamics of county politics would allow.

Notes

- 1 *MHJ* XVI p. 46.
- 2 Katzburg, *Pinkas ha-Kehilla: Hungariya*, p. 359 and p. 271.
- 3 Gregory H. Nobles, "Breaking into the Backcountry: New Approaches to the Early American Frontier, 1750–1800," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series, 46:4 (1989) p. 645. I extend my gratitude to Jason Opal for bringing this article to my attention.
- 4 The most detailed history of Miskolc is János Szendrei's *Miskolc város története*, [A History of the Town of Miskolc] (Budapest, 1911). A more recent study is Gyula Antalfy's *Reformkori magyar várossrajzok* [Descriptions of Reform-Era Hungarian Cities, hereinafter Antalfy, *Hungarian Cities*] (Budapest, 1982), pp. 411–429. There is also considerable detail in Elek Fényes's *Magyarország Statisztikája*, [The Statistics of Hungary, hereinafter Fényes, *Statisztikája*] (Pest, 1837) Vol. II, pp. 89–105. Drawing on these works and original archival research, István Dobrossy, director of the Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County Archive in Miskolc has edited and written in collaboration with other scholars two recent works that draw on more current historical methods. See István Dobrossy, ed., *Miskolc története*, [History of Miskolc] 3 volumes (Miskolc, 1996) and Dobrossy, ed., *Miskolc város iratokban és képekben* [The City of Miskolc in Text and Images] 10 volumes, (Miskolc, 1998).
- 5 Antalfy, *Hungarian Cities*, p. 417. According to Dobrossy, Széchenyi visited in 1835, 1844, and 1845, and Jókai in 1883.
- 6 Antalfy, *Hungarian Cities*, p. 420. The state-fairs took place on February 16, May 25, August 26, October 18, and December 17.
- 7 Vera Bácskai, *Piackörzetek, piacközpontok, és városok Magyarországon 1828-ban* [Market Centers, Regional Centers, and Towns in Hungary in 1828] (Budapest, 1984), p. 27.
- 8 Antalfy, *Hungarian Cities* p. 414.
- 9 Dobrossy, *Miskolc története* II., pp. 50–51; Fényes, *Statisztikája*, p. 97; Antalfy, *Hungarian Cities*, p. 421.
- 10 *Ber of Bolechow*, p. 61.
- 11 Fényes, *Statisztikája*, p. 94.
- 12 Lajos Marjalaki Kiss, *Régi népszámlálások Miskolcon* [Old censuses in Miskolc] (Miskolc, 1930), p. 8; p. 596.
- 13 Dobrossy, *Miskolc története* III/1, pp. 26–27.
- 14 Király, *Hungary*, p. 43. "It was a royal prerogative to grant the status of a royal free town to any settlement. The granting of the status of a burgher, on the other hand, was the privilege of the town council."
- 15 Fényes, *Statisztikája*, pp. 98–99.
- 16 Fényes, *Statisztikája*, pp. 96–97. For a more detailed discussion of these designations, see Andor Csizmadia, *A magyar közigazgatás fejlődése* [The Development of Hungarian Public Law] (Budapest, 1961), pp. 21–25.
- 17 Király, *Hungary*, pp. 24ff.

- 18 Danyi and Dávid ed, *Az első magyarországi népszámlálás*, p. 43. The head of the Coburg family held the title of prince. The rest were counts.
- 19 István Deák, *The Lawful Revolution. Louis Kossuth and the Hungarians, 1848–1849* (New York, 1979), p. 7.
- 20 Péter László, “The Aristocracy, the Gentry, and their Parliamentary Tradition in Nineteenth-Century Hungary,” *Slavonic and East European Review* 70/1 (1992), pp. 78–80.
- 21 Béla Király, *Hungary in the Late Eighteenth Century: The Decline of Enlightened Absolutism* (New York and London, 1969), pp. 108–111 and p. 263.
- 22 Raphael Mahler, *Divre Yeme Yisrael: Dorot Aharonim mi-Shalhe ba-Meah ha-18 ad Yameinu* (Jerusalem, 1972), p. 242.
- 23 Grete Klingenstein, *Der Aufstieg des Hauses Kaunitz* (Göttingen, 1975), p. 95.
- 24 MHJ VII (1962) pp. 310ff.
- 25 Henrik Marczali, *Hungary in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1910), pp. 8–11, 56–56, 120–121.
- 26 Ibid., p. 73.
- 27 Rebecca Gates-Coon, *The Landed Estates of the Esterházy Princes: Hungary during the Reforms of Maria Theresa and Joseph II* (Baltimore and London, 1994), pp. 77–84.
- 28 István Kallay, “Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft der königlichen Freistädte Ungarns zur Zeit Maria Theresias,” pp. 124–125.
- 29 Dobrossy, *Miskolc története* III/1 pp. 470–471.
- 30 The following discussion is based on Dobrossy, *Miskolc története* III/2, pp. 707–709.
- 31 Ibid., p. 708.
- 32 Ibid., pp. 709–710.
- 33 MHJ XVI p. 46.
- 34 Béla Bernstein, “Die Toleranztaxe der Juden in Ungarn,” in M. Brann and F. Rosenthal, eds., *Gedenkbuch Zur Erinnerung an David Kaufman*, (Hereinafter Bernstein, “Toleranztaxe”) (Breslau, 1900) pp. 599–628.
- 35 Bernstein, “Toleranztaxe,” pp. 600–601, p. 622.
- 36 MHJ XIII pp. 125–126 and 137–138.
- 37 MHJ XVI pp. 45–47.
- 38 Moses Richtmann, “A régi Magyarország zsidósága,” in Silber, *Roots of the Schism*, pp. 108–110.
- 39 Bernstein, “Toleranztaxe,” pp. 601–605; on the change in the Maria Theresa’s attitude toward Jews during the course of her reign, see C. A. Macartney, *Maria Theresa and the House of Austria*, (New York, 1969), pp. 75–78.
- 40 MHJ XV pp. 117–123.
- 41 Franz A. J. Szabo, *Kaunitz and Enlightened Absolutism, 1753–1780* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 303ff.
- 42 Gates-Coon, “Eighteenth Century *Schutzherren*: Esterházy Patronage of the Jews,” *Jewish Social Studies* 47 3–4 (1985) p. 193. Gates-Coon notes further: “In this scenario, both wealthy and poor Jews on Esterházy lands had a role to play.”

- 43 István Virág, *A zsidók jogállása Magyarországon, 1657–1780* [Legal Status of the Jews in Hungary, 1657–1780] (Budapest, 1935), pp. 34ff.
- 44 “Letter of Toleration from Prince Esterházy to the Jewish Community of Mattersdorf, (Issued in 1694 and renewed in 1800)” *Ma’amar Sheva Kibilot* Moshe Goldstein ed., (Tel Aviv, 1956), p. 36.
- 45 Péter Ujvári, *Magyar Zsidó Lexikon* [Hungarian Jewish Lexicon, hereinafter Lexikon] (Budapest, 1929), p. 606.
- 46 “Letters of Toleration,” p. 37.
- 47 *MHJ* XVI p. 46.
- 48 Ujvári, *Lexikon*, p. 606.
- 49 The patent made four essential changes in the situation of Hungarian and other Habsburg Jews. It nullified restrictions that barred Jews from settling in chartered towns. It allowed Jews to engage in crafts. It authorized the conscription of Jews into the imperial army. Finally, it called on Jews to adopt German as their spoken language, and created a government-sponsored school system to help them. Paul Bernard, “Joseph II and the Jews: the Origins of the Toleration Patent of 1782,” *Austrian History Yearbook* 4–5, pp. 101–119, especially pp. 104–107.
- 50 Horst Haselsteiner, *Joseph II. Und die Komitate Ungarns: Herrscherrecht und ständischer Konstitutionalismus*. (Vienna–Cologne–Graz, 1982), pp. 29–30.
- 51 Jacob Katz, *Out of the Ghetto: The Social Background of Jewish Emancipation, 1770–1870*, (New York, 1978), pp. 161–164.
- 52 A cursory glance at the population figures collected by Katzburg suggests that the largest Jewish communities in Hungary were market towns, and that the Jewish population of royal free cities was minuscule. Katzburg, *Pinkas ha-Kehillot: Hungariya* (Jerusalem, 1976).
- 53 Gates-Coon, *The Landed Estates of the Esterházy Princes*, pp. 68–69.
- 54 *MHJ* XVI pp. 238ff.
- 55 Márta Búr, “A balkáni kereskedők és a magyar borkivitel a XVIII. században” [Balkan Merchants and the Hungarian Wine-Trade in the Eighteenth Century] *Történelmi Szemle* 21:2 (1978) p. 288ff. “Greek” here means Greek or some form of other Orthodox Christian, including Armenian and Serbian.
- 56 Dobrossy, *Miskolc története* III/1, p. 446.
- 57 *Ibid.*, p. 447.
- 58 *MHJ* XVIII p. 533.
- 59 *The Memoirs of Ber of Bolechow (1723–1805)*, Translated from the original Hebrew by Moshe Vishnitzer (North Stratford, CT, Ayer Company Publishing Inc., 2000), especially pp. 52; *ibid.*, p. 85.
- 60 *Ibid.*, pp. 91–93.
- 61 Richmann, “A régi Magyarország zsidósága,” p. 116; Richard Bright, *Travels from Vienna through Lower Hungary with some Remarks on the State of Vienna During the Congress in the Year 1814*, (Edinburgh, 1818) p. 195.
- 62 “A Kazinczy utcai zsinagóga” [The Kazinczy street synagogue] in István Dobrossy ed., *Miskolc: Írásban és Képekben* [Miskolc in Words and Pictures] vol. 3 pp. 171–172.

- 63 Dobrossy, *Miskolc története* III/2 p. 816.
- 64 Ujvári, *Lexikon*, p. 611
- 65 Bernát Mandl, *Die Jüdische schulwesen in Ungarn unter Kaiser Josef II (1780–1790)*, [Jewish Education in Hungary under Joseph II], (Budapest, 1903).
- 66 Mandl, *Die Jüdische Schulwesen in Ungarn*, pp. 29–31.
- 67 Ibid., p. 32.
- 68 Ezekiel Landau, *Drushe ha-Tzela* (Jerusalem, 1965) pp. 53:a.
- 69 Ujvári, *Lexikon*, p. 607.
- 70 *Ber of Bolechow*, pp. 63–65; Antonio Szirmay, *Notitia historica politica oeconomica montium et locorum viniferorum comitatus Zempleniensis*(sic), (Cassa, 1798) p. 69.
- 71 Ibid, p. 38; Ujvári, *Lexikon*, p. 611.
- 72 “Letter of Toleration,” p. 38.

A MISKOLCZI
ORTHOD.
IZRAELITA HITKÖZSÉG

a budapesti izr. orsz. közvetítő bizottság 1878. évi
július hó 1-én 2386. sz. a. kelt záradékával jóváhagyott

ALAPSZABÁLYAI.

MISKOLCZ,
FORSTER REZSŐ KÖNYVNYOMDÁJÁBÓL
1881.

*Crown, Town, Magnate, and Jew:
Corporate Politics in Borsod County*

In June of 1793, a fire broke out at the home of Lőrincz Löbl, a Jew who had settled in Miskolc during the 1780s. It spread to the house of his neighbor, a member of the middle nobility. The nobleman asked the city magistrate to extract payment from Löbl for property damages. He also asked the city council to evict Löbl from Miskolc on the grounds that Löbl was an illegal alien. The magistrate ordered Löbl to pay damages in full but, despite the city council's order to evict Löbl, upheld his right to reside in Miskolc. A key factor in the court's decision was the intervention of Count István Csáky, a magnate whom Löbl served as a financial agent. Csáky had no intention of allowing the town to evict someone vital to his interests.¹

The outcome of this case and the major players involved—a Jewish merchant, his magnate patron, a lesser-nobleman adversary, the city council, and city's magistracy—marked the immersion of the economic relations between magnates and Jews into the corporate politics of turn of the nineteenth century Miskolc and Borsod County. By convincing the magistrate to uphold Löbl's right to reside in Miskolc over the objections of the town council and a lesser nobleman, Csáky demonstrated a magnate's ability to circumvent municipal law. He used judicial decision-making in order to insulate Miskolc Jews from legislated restrictions.

The willingness of Csáky to protect a Jew from an adversarial municipal law, and even against the claim of a fellow nobleman, reflected the overall political strategy of leading magnate families after 1790. After defeating the reform program of Joseph II, the coterie of lead-

ing magnate families in Borsod County curtailed the city of Miskolc's royal privileges, striking another blow against Habsburg intrusion. They then subordinated the thousands of lesser nobility to a position of secondary importance in order to liberate profit-minded magnates from conservative county politics.

For Jews, the patronage of magnates like Csáky was itself nothing new. Aside from a brief interlude of additional legislated privileges under Joseph II, Miskolc Jews and would-be Jewish settlers relied almost exclusively on magnate protection. Indeed, for the next half century, Miskolc Jews would obtain additional privileges almost exclusively from leading magnates and, by extension, from the noble-dominated county government. They often obtained these new privileges indirectly, as their magnate patrons prevented other corporate groups from implementing or enforcing restrictions on Jewish settlement and trade.²

The means and motivation of magnate patronage, however, changed after 1790. Until 1790, individual magnates had protected the person or property of individual Jews. Thereafter, magnate protection was increasingly channeled through the Miskolc magistracy, an office controlled by a syndicate of leading magnate families. In the absence of a reliable system of Jewish courts, Jews increasingly relied on the Miskolc magistrates during the first three decades of the nineteenth century, initially for protection and to settle disputes with Christians; eventually, to mediate civic and criminal disputes with other Jews. After Jews in Miskolc and other Borsod County towns established tribunals of their own, the Miskolc magistracy continued to function as a court of appeals for internal Jewish disputes.

Previously, the magnates' incentive to protect Jews had been economic. Helping Jews to prosper meant more tax revenue and, for magnates involved in joint business ventures with Jews, more profit. By the 1820s, the magnates' motivation, though still primarily economic, took on a political overtone. The steady increase in the number of Jews in Miskolc after 1790, and the extent to which Jews were able to trade freely there, measured the balance of power between leading magnates and their corporate rivals—the city of Miskolc, the Habsburg Crown, and the middle-nobility.

A different side of 1789

The struggle for hegemony in Miskolc reflected the largest political endeavor by the magnates of Borsod County after 1790. Miskolc was an unusual combination of a market town and a royal free city, thus a telling indicator in the nobility's struggle to subordinate chartered towns. Following the collapse of Joseph II's Patent in 1789, Miskolc did not revert back entirely to the Grassalkovics Agreement. Lionized by Habsburg support for chartered towns, the Miskolc burghers reached a new agreement with leading magnates. Under the terms of this new agreement, the burghers elected a mayor for the first time in May, 1789. The mayor, with the assistance of the city council, supervised all aspects of public life, including the city economy and the appointment and dismissal of city officials. As the new mayor expanded city administration, the number of city officials increased steadily after 1789.³

By March 1790, however, the authority of the mayor and the council was limited by the appointment of a chief magistrate, an office dominated by the landed nobility. The chief magistrate's mandate was defined as "the service of justice," giving him wide latitude and scope of authority. In addition to controlling the city judiciary, the chief magistrate had the final say in economic matters; the mayor had to report to him regarding the city economy and relations with other cities, the county, and the royal crown. The chief magistrate also mediated conflicts between the city council and lesser magistrates. Through the chief magistrate, the local nobility retained a large measure of the influence they had gained through the Grassalkovics Agreement. The division of powers between mayor and city council and the magnate-controlled judiciary remained in effect until 1836. After 1789, therefore, the heart of Miskolc city government was an on-going negotiation between the nobility-dominated judiciary and the burgher-controlled legislature. As István Dobrossy suggested, "Miskolc, in its function and outside contacts, blended elements of a market town and a royal free city."⁴

The prominent role of the magistrate in city affairs was unique neither to Borsod County nor to Hungary. Magnates played a prominent role in the affairs of market towns in seventeenth and eighteenth cen-

tury Poland and in nineteenth century Galicia, especially in areas of Poland that were underpopulated and under reconstruction. Like the Miskolc magistrate, magnate courts in Polish towns were an important element in Polish Jewry's system of Justice. As Moshe Rosman has pointed out "Jewish appeals to non-Jewish authorities indicate that the Jews understood that their conflicts took place within the larger context of the law and politics of the state they lived in."⁵

A key difference in this respect between Borsod and Poland was that, in Poland, the political status of Jews and magnates had been well-established by the eighteenth century. The Polish magnates, unencumbered by a royal crown that was in sharp decline during the eighteenth century and posed little challenge, had virtually free reign in their domains: "On his domain a magnate was sole legislator, chief executive, commander in chief of his private army, supreme judge, and the source of all authority and benefice."⁶ The same was true in those Hungarian counties that were controlled by a single magnate family. The Esterházy family dominated the legislative and judicial affairs of Sopron County, as did the Pálffy and Zichy families in Moson County. The 1800 charter given to Sopron County Jews by Pál Esterházy closely resembled its 1694 predecessor, suggesting that Esterházy policy regarding Jews was well-established by the beginning of the eighteenth century.⁷

In Borsod County, leading magnate families were still facing challenges to their dominance in county politics internally from the middle-nobility and externally from the Habsburg Crown, all the while vying with each other for hegemony. It was amidst these three struggles that magnate support for Jewish settlement and trade had political overtones. The growing presence of Jews settling and trading in Miskolc measured the continued dominance of leading magnates over the town's burghers, lesser noblemen, and the magnates' arch corporate rivals—the Habsburg Dynasty.

In one sense, the absence of a single dominant magnate family worked to the advantage of Jews. Magnate influence in Miskolc was not tied to an individual family but to a government position. Jews were thus not at the mercy of the magnate family who owned and governed the town, as they were in most market towns. Jews dissatisfied with their magnate patron could appeal to the Miskolc magistrate,

whose overarching concern was not the interests of a single magnate family but the “population growth and resulting felicity of the noble town of Miskolc.”⁸ This, as will be seen, gave Jews leverage they did not have in other market towns, where the judiciary was synonymous with the interests of a single family.

The decline of the Greeks

Magnate protection and patronage of Jews in Miskolc was further encouraged by the decline of Balkan dominance over trade in Miskolc and other commercial centers at the end of the eighteenth century. During the 1770s, Balkan commercial superiority in Borsod County had begun to wane, owing to the Habsburg government’s stricter regulations. The Treaty of Passarowitz, concluded in 1718 between the Habsburg and Ottoman Emperors, diminished the commercial advantages of the Balkan merchants. The treaty eased restrictions on commerce between the two empires, eroding the Balkan merchants’ advantage in paying lower customs. In 1774, Balkan merchants were required to swear an oath of allegiance to Maria Theresa or be disallowed from trading in Habsburg Lands. This preempted them from evading local tolls and taxes by claiming to be Ottoman subjects. In 1780, the royal crown outlawed towns from selling import and export licenses to Balkan merchants, unless the town had more Christian merchants than Balkan merchants. The same law forbade Christian merchants from entering into partnerships with any merchant claiming to be under Ottoman jurisdiction.⁹

For most Balkan merchants, these new regulations had a decidedly negative impact. Banned, for all intents and purposes, from importing goods from the Ottoman Empire, many turned to the less lucrative trade in food-stuffs. Those unable to make the transition from importing to domestic trade went bankrupt and emigrated to the Ottoman Empire. Those who made this transition successfully emerged as the wealthiest merchants in Hungary by the end of the eighteenth century.

The decline in the number of successful Balkan merchants in Miskolc coincided with the ascendancy of Jewish merchants, aided by

growing magnate sponsorship. Until the end of the 1780s, leading magnates were equally supportive of Jewish and Balkan merchants. The Dóry House, a hub of magnate-protected commerce in Miskolc, was divided between the two groups, the east wing being occupied by Balkan merchants and the west wing by Jews.¹⁰

From the 1790s on, however, magnates increasingly preferred Jewish businessmen to Balkan merchants, for two reasons. Balkan commerce was not as profitable to magnates as Jewish commerce because Balkan businessmen tended to deal primarily in luxury goods; only recently of necessity had they begun trading in the agricultural goods produced on the magnates' estates. In addition, Balkan merchants frequently used the wealth they accrued from commerce as a means to purchase a noble patent, rather than reinvesting it as capital. The limited commercial goals of the Greek merchants clashed with the magnates' broader aim of expanding commerce in Central Hungary.¹¹

Jewish merchants, on the other hand, had little or no chance of ennoblement without converting to Christianity until the second half of the nineteenth century. They regarded commercial wealth as an end in and of itself. Their status depended entirely on their wealth; therefore, they strove to acquire as much wealth as possible. Their commercial aims satisfied the economic needs of the magnates, who in turn made every effort to dissolve Greek trading companies while facilitating the commercial activities of Jewish merchants.¹²

As magnate support swung the balance between Greeks and Jews in favor of the latter, Jews moved into more lucrative areas of commerce once controlled by Greek merchants. In 1817, Jews leased 17 properties in Miskolc, while non-noble Greeks leased 14.¹³ According to an 1828 city registry, eight of the top-ten wealthiest non-noble merchants were Jews; only two were Greek. The three wealthiest Jewish merchants earned 740 forints; the top three Greek merchants earned 400.¹⁴

The Miskolc Magistracy as protector

The immediate aim of the magnates in supporting Jews over Greeks was to further their own commercial interests. By allowing Jews to make more money, they gave Jews the means to pay more taxes to their magnate benefactors. In addition, in cases when magnates were not only the protectors but commercial partners of Jews, helping Jews translated into profit for the magnates.¹⁵

By the 1810s, the Miskolc magistrate emerged as a form of support and protection for Jews that complimented the efforts of individual magnates. In one case, hooligans set fire to the home of Joseph the Jew, a financial agent of the Csáky family who had been seen arguing with a Christian merchant the day before over a shipment of beef. When the court's investigation into this matter stalled, Csáky pressed the court to continue. Further investigation uncovered two witnesses—Greenbaum, a Jew from Salona living temporarily in Miskolc, and an unnamed peasant farmer—who identified a man running out of the burning house. After the perpetrator was convicted of arson and destruction of property, he implicated the Christian merchant. The court ordered the latter to compensate Joseph in full.¹⁶

In some cases, protection by the Miskolc magistrate eventually replaced protection by an individual magnate. According to an 1817 city registry, most Jews who leased property in Miskolc did so on behalf of a magnate family. Four of the eighteen Jewish leaseholders, though, leased property without magnate patronage. These Jews obtained permission directly from the court, without the direct intervention of a magnate patron: three Jewish butchers—Joseph Roth, Michael Kolmajer, and Wolf Brody—who held leases “behind the town square,” and the widow of Daniel Schwartzner, a free merchant whose property was listed simply as “personal possession.”¹⁷

In disputes between Miskolc Jews and Jews from other towns, the support of the Miskolc magistrate proved advantageous to the patronage of an individual magnate. In 1813, Joseph Klein, a financial agent of the Erdődy Family, borrowed 10,000 forints from four Miskolc Jews—Isaac and Moses Altman, Samuel Sarman, and Elizabeth Salomon. Four years later, after Klein claimed he had paid back 7,800

forints, the Miskolc Jews sued him, claiming he had repaid only 5,000. A year later, the court ruled in favor of the Miskolc Jews.¹⁸

Eventually, Jews elsewhere in Borsod County came to rely on the Miskolc magistrate. When five Szentpéter Jews had trouble collecting a debt in 1818, the Miskolc magistrate intervened and forced the individuals who owed the money to pay in full.¹⁹ The Miskolc magistrate occasionally overruled a district court decision in Borsod County. In 1818, four nobles and a Jew from Szendrő district sued another Jew. After a Szendrő district judge ruled in favor of the defendant, the plaintiffs appealed to the Miskolc magistrate, who ruled in their favor.²⁰

The Miskolc magistrate, moreover, provided Jews with badly needed additional protection from the lawlessness and perils of a frontier town and the surrounding region. This was especially important during the 1790s, as the popular hysteria generated by the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars aggravated the lawlessness in Borsod County, as elsewhere in Hungary. The threat of popular hysteria frightened many Jews—particularly affluent Jews who considered themselves likely targets of peasant violence. This lingering fear was expressed by representatives of Hungarian Jewry in a petition submitted to the National Diet in 1793:

Everywhere we are treated not like people, and not like the other inhabitants of this country, but rather like criminals. The jeers, mockery, and assaults of the mob pursue us from town to town and from village to village. Every traveler must still brave the dangers of highways and roads, because the mischievous youth who pelt them with stones go unpunished...But now a new day is dawning all over Europe, in which no one will be so uncivilized or uneducated that he knows not how one person should treat another. Everywhere a more sober philosophy raises its illustrious head, which teaches everyone without exception that, without crime, every single inhabitant of the country will be able to attain his right to life, knowledge, and fortune.²¹

Jews in Miskolc were especially afraid of hooligans, bandits, and ruthless commercial competitors. One Jewish merchant, while transporting a shipment of grain and animal hides from Miskolc to Pest, heard rumors that local bandits planned to rob his caravan. He decided to store his merchandise overnight, but could not find a secure warehouse. Fearing both for his own safety and for that of his merchandise, he obtained permission from the court to store the goods in a

local warehouse until the would-be perpetrators were brought to justice.²²

In another case, wine-dealer János Klinkó complained to the magistrate regarding a rival wine-dealer, who was a known bandit. The rival merchant, after reneging on a debt of 300 forints, broke into the county warehouse and stole Klinkó's store of wine. Klinkó urged the court to apprehend the thief, not only because of the stolen wine but also "because his presence is harmful to public order." In another instance, Klinkó complained that his guests, Jewish merchants from Pest, had slandered his reputation and given false information about him to his other guests. In both cases the court ruled in Klinkó's favor and ordered the perpetrators to return the stolen goods and offer Klinkó a public apology.²³

The magistrate also provided economic protection from more established Jewish merchants of Pest who tried to intimidate their less-established counterparts in Miskolc, and keep them from trading with other merchants in Pest and western Hungary. The Pest merchants resorted to a variety of tactics: blackmail, rumor-mongering, and even physical violence. One Jewish cattle merchant from Miskolc petitioned the local magistrate to protect him from a group of Pest Jewish merchants who were trying to extort money from him. He claimed that the Pest merchants had driven him from his home, slandered him to his clients, poached some of his cattle, and threatened him with physical assault. After his magnate benefactor intervened, the magistrate agreed to admonish the Jews from Pest.²⁴

The court's protection of goods filled the role that would later be filled by banks and other financial institutions. One Miskolc Jew asked Miskolc nobleman Pál Forgács to hold onto to the cash that the Jew planned to use to pay for a shipment of wool en route from Pest, "because of dangerous travel conditions." Jews found similar protection from their magnate patrons. In one case, Jacob Klein arranged with Count Ferenc Dessewffy to accept precious stones as collateral for a loan. Explaining how, "My lord knows how I fear traveling and of spending nights in unfamiliar towns and villages with such valuable property," Klein asked Dessewffy to hold onto the stones for safe-keeping during the duration of the loan, "even if his eminence is unable to repay the loan in time."²⁵

In addition to physical protection, favorable treatment by the Miskolc magistrate gave Miskolc Jews an advantage over Jews from elsewhere in Borsod County. For example, Isaac Zsilas of Szentpéter twice complained to the Miskolc magistrate of being swindled by Miskolc Jew Lőrincz Weisz. Although there were similar complaints against Weisz from other Jews in Borsod County, the court ruled each time in Weisz's favor, dismissing the complaints. In another case, the court ordered Hejőcsaba Jew Elizabeth Niederlander to pay Miskolc Jew Ernest Heiman 2000 forints, despite the lack of documentation, suggesting a preference for the word of a Miskolc Jew.²⁶

The Miskolc magistrate not only complimented the support and protection by magnate patrons, but gave Jews a certain advantage in their dealings with magnate patrons. In upstart commercial areas like Borsod County, the decline of Balkan merchants created a shortage of capable financial agents, increasing the commercial value of Jewish ones. This allowed some Jews to have ties with more than one prominent magnate family. Moses Katz Ráth, for example, was the financial representative of the Csáky Family, but lived and traded in Miskolc under the aegis of the Vay Family.²⁷

As the economy expanded during the first quarter of the nineteenth century, the shortage of financial agents became even more chronic and magnate families competed with each other for the services of capable Jewish agents. In Borsod County, the competition grew more intense when István Esterházy established a foothold in the Borsod County town of Edelény and began to lure Jewish merchants away from their magnate patrons. Esterházy died shortly thereafter, but his widow continued his efforts. The alluring presence of the Esterházy family in Borsod county, coupled with the shortage of capable Jewish financial agents, encouraged magnates to provide their Jewish agents with preferential treatment.²⁸

The political implications of magnate–Jewish relations

The very presence of Jews reflected and translated into magnate influence. The increase of the Jewish population after 1790 meant a growing number of tax-paying subjects situated in the economic heart of

the county. Property owned by Jews in Miskolc was listed in the town registry into the 1830s as magnate holdings.²⁹ In effect, by facilitating Jewish settlement into Miskolc—once a bastion of Greek and other Christian merchants—the magnates minimized the effect of the 1789 revised agreement between Miskolc and the county nobility.

More contentious was the attempt by magnates to minimize royal influence in Borsod County politics. Because the principle impediment to Jewish settlement in Miskolc was one of the corporate privileges restored to chartered cities by the Habsburgs, the growing Jewish presence in Miskolc marked the ascendancy of magnate-sponsored privileges over Habsburg-sponsored privileges. By siding with Jewish merchants against their Greek rivals, the magnates replaced the Habsburg-sponsored Greek merchants with magnate-sponsored Jewish merchants.

The magnates pressed further by sabotaging the principal connection between Borsod County Jews and the dynasty—the Toleration Tax. This effort was not unique to Borsod County, but detectable in other counties as well. Although this tax remained nominally in effect for all Jews in Habsburg Lands until its abolition in 1846, Jews in Hungary consistently failed to pay it. After 1790, the debt that Hungarian Jews owed to the royal crown rose steadily and continued to rise into the 1840s.³⁰ This is surprising given that, by the 1820s, there were individual Hungarian Jews in numerous communities who could have paid the local tax obligation single-handedly. In Miskolc, any of several Jewish families could easily have paid the share owed not only by the Jews of Miskolc but for all of Borsod county.³¹

That Borsod County Jews defaulted on paying the tax had less to do with Jews' ability to pay than Habsburg regime's ability to collect. The limited number of Habsburg bureaucrats in Hungary and their virtual absence outside of Pest forced the Habsburg regime to depend on the cooperation of county officials, whose efforts to collect the tax were tepid, at best. As Michael Silber pointed out: "The numerous noblemen who served as county officials regarded demands of the central bureaucracy with suspicion, and saw in them an attempt to interfere with the legal autonomy of Hungary."³²

This attitude was echoed in Borsod County. As early as January 1820, the Miskolc magistrate began to question this tax obligation. In

one case, the magistrate notarized an agreement between István Csáky and a Miskolc Jew, identified as Samuel, in which the latter paid three bushels of grain in exchange for a renewed lease on a Miskolc property. The magistrate tersely appended his ruling: "Where should Jews pay taxes?"³³ More directly, Miskolc Jew Joseph Altmann, a member of the seven-man executive authorized to collect the Toleration Tax in Borsod County, was sued over a debt he allegedly owed his magnate patron. The patron claimed that the Jew failed to pay his debt because of his tax obligations to the crown. In response, the Miskolc magistrate questioned this tax obligation: "Is there a need for this tax?"³⁴

The most complex problem for magnates, though, was subordinating the thousands of middle- and lower nobility who, in the minds of magnates, impeded commercial growth and urban development. According to the census of 1784–1785, the vast majority of the more than eight thousand nobles in Borsod County belonged to the middle- and lower-nobility.³⁵ More than 1,300 lesser noblemen lived in Miskolc, the largest concentration of middle- and lower-nobility in Borsod County. They were the focal point of the struggle between the magnates and lesser nobles.³⁶

Magnates and lesser nobles had united in opposition to Joseph II. Joseph II had offended the nobility—magnates and lesser nobles alike—by counting them in the census of 1784 along with the underprivileged classes, and by dividing the kingdom into districts. In response, the nobility had rejected the Josephinian Reforms on legal grounds. They claimed that the emperor had violated one of their cardinal privileges by trying to rule Hungary as he ruled his other possessions, that is, absolutely as emperor and not constitutionally as King of Hungary.³⁷

At the same time, however, magnates and lesser nobles regarded the Josephinian reforms very differently. The magnates, even after rejecting the Josephinian Reforms, continued to implement these reforms locally. They retained, in the words of Éva H. Balázs, "an affinity for Josephism despite an outright rejection of Joseph II."³⁸ Lesser noblemen generally look askance at social and economic change of any kind, including those of Joseph II.

As a rule, lesser nobles had very little influence compared with the magnates, except inside the county diet. Their numerical superiority

enabled them to block legislation they deemed unacceptable. Although they had no political power beyond the right to cast a vote, this mass of lesser noblemen obstructed efforts by upper noblemen to stimulate commerce.³⁹ As more and more lesser noblemen settled in Miskolc, moreover, their very presence there impeded economic growth. Because most of the 1,300 nobles living in Miskolc were exempt from paying taxes, the rest of the town's tax-paying population had to support a large non-tax-paying population. Property taxes, for example, doubled during the 1810s, draining the collective wealth of the populace.⁴⁰

In Borsod County, the magnates circumvented such legislative impediments to judicial decision-making, that is, by controlling the Miskolc magistrate. When Zsigmond Székely, a lesser nobleman from Szendrő, refused to pay a debt to Jewish money-lender Jacob Kis on the grounds that the Jew had offended him, the nobleman petitioned the county diet to nullify the debt. The diet referred the matter to the Miskolc magistrate, who ordered the noble to pay in full.⁴¹

The impeding presence of lesser noblemen worsened during the Napoleonic Wars. The economic boom that swept across Hungary drew a growing number of middle-noblemen into the realm of commerce.⁴² This expanding economy initially gave middle-noblemen an opportunity to help build trade. Middle noblemen, though, were often upstarts in the world of commerce unable to grasp the importance of such basic concepts as prompt delivery of goods, paying debts promptly, and using written contracts rather than relying exclusively on verbal agreements.

Moreover, they often allowed questions of honor and dignity to supersede the pressing demands of efficient commerce. The difference between a contract that involved a member of the nobility and one between non-nobles is striking. When no noblemen were involved, the document is a concise articulation of the terms of the agreement. When a nobleman was involved the contract was three times as long and replete with honorifics and "apologies" by the non-noble for asking the nobleman to meet the terms of the agreement.⁴³

As the economy expanded during the war years there was sufficient business that their lack of economic acumen did not cause problems. However, the economic boom of the war period gave way to a

decade-long recession after 1815. The growing presence and poor performance of noble businessmen presented magnates with the awkward problem of curtailing the middle noblemen's commercial influence without damaging their dignity.

The solution to this dilemma emerged out of a dispute over the status of nobles in Miskolc. By 1818, the city's opposition to the presence of these lesser nobles provided a forum for magnates to subordinate, first, lesser nobles residing in Miskolc and then those throughout Borsod County. To this end, the county deputy sheriff, Joseph Szathmáry-Király, convened a special assembly of magnates to resolve lesser nobles' ambivalent status. This assembly was aided by the fact that the status of lesser noblemen in Miskolc was clearly defined neither by the Grassalkovics Agreement nor by the 1789 revision of this agreement.⁴⁴

Unwilling to undermine the privileges of lesser nobles, however, this assembly settled for a stopgap solution to the economic problem caused by lesser noblemen in Miskolc. The assembly allowed these lesser noblemen to retain all noble privileges, including their exemption from paying taxes. In exchange, the lesser noblemen agreed to cede all property held in common with the Landed Estate, and not to oppose legislative reforms by the county diet. In effect, magnates enhanced their position in county politics without resolving the Miskolc problem.⁴⁵

They solved this problem judicially through the office of the magistrate, by supporting Jewish merchants in disputes with middle-noblemen. In one case, middle-nobleman János Ran sued Miskolc Jew Solomon Funkenstein in 1818, claiming that the Jew refused to give him an extension on a loan. When Funkenstein informed the court that the debt had been outstanding since 1809 and that the nobleman had already received numerous extensions, the magistrate ordered Ran to pay immediately and in full.⁴⁶

Emblematic of the tensions between elite and lesser noblemen, and illustrative of the discrepancies between legal status and judicial decision-making was the protracted lawsuit between Mayer Ráth and János Paulikovics.⁴⁷ Ráth was the son of Moses Katz Ráth, and, like the elder Ráth, a financial agent of the Csáky family. In September 1820, Paulikovics hired Ráth to deliver a shipment of animal hides,

wine, and grain to Edelény. Ráth agreed but insisted on three conditions. He asked Paulikovics to pay part of the expense in advance, to assume partial responsibility in the event that the shipment was attacked, and, finally, to put the entire agreement in writing. Paulikovics refused to meet any of these conditions. When Ráth, in turn, refused to deliver the goods, Paulikovics sued him, claiming that the Jew had insulted his dignity as a nobleman. The case attracted enough attention in Miskolc and its environs that the presiding magistrate ordered it tried as a public hearing.

The court deliberated for six months. During this time, circumstances added further significance to the pending court decision. Count Csáky had already lost two Jewish financial agents to the Esterházys in Edelény, who wanted to hire Mayer Ráth as well. Not surprisingly, Csáky intervened on Ráth's behalf.

The court, unwilling to demean a nobleman in favor of a Jew, ruled for Paulikovics in May 1822. However, it did not impose any financial penalty on Ráth. Moreover, the court warned Paulikovics to meet his commercial obligations more reliably in the future. Although Paulikovics ostensibly emerged triumphant and his noble honor remained intact, his pyrrhic victory benefitted his Jewish adversary as much or more. Ráth continued to conduct business for Count Csáky, and he grew steadily wealthier. Paulikovics, although he retained all the rights of a nobleman, was never again mentioned in subsequent court records.⁴⁸ Ráth's ultimate victory in this case reflected the success of Borsod county magnates in modifying the status of non-noble subjects, and even lesser nobles, without actually changing the law.

The outcome of this case placed Miskolc Jews in a more favorable position with respect to Miskolc Christians, and even lesser nobleman. It exemplified the emergence of the Miskolc magistrate as an exemplar of magnates protecting Jewish commerce and settlement. For the next half-century—and arguably long after that—magnate protection, support, and non-legal rights would be the determining factor in the status of Jews.

From personal ties to communal negotiations

While adding an additional dimension, the role of Miskolc magistrate did not fundamentally alter the relationship between magnates and Jews, which remained a relationship between individual Jews and a magnate patron. Yet it is noteworthy that the individual rather than collective or communal nature of this relationship created the opportunity for personal contacts between magnate patrons and Jewish women. Often these women were widows whose wealth allowed them a certain status independent of a husband or other male relative. In 1819, for example, the widow of Farkas Groszman claimed that she had been wrongfully sued by the widow of Abraham Eigner.⁴⁹ The widow of Jacob Falk, after taking over her late husband's financial dealings with the Vay Family, sued Joseph Vay for refusing payment on debts owed to her late husband.⁵⁰

Foremost in this regard was Rebecca Ráth, the wife—and, later, the widow—of Moses Ráth. When Moses Ráth died in 1819, Rebecca maintained his commercial connection with the Csáky family. When her son Meir was old enough to run the family business, rather than turning it over to him she and her son ran it together until her death in the mid-1820s. It should be noted, though, that, although Rebecca ran the business for several years, she still was not legally allowed to sign contracts. Meir's signature was required even before he reached the age of majority. His signature always accompanied hers, but hers did not always accompany his.

Other Jewish women in Miskolc engaged in commerce jointly with their husbands. The long commercial relationship between the Krause family and their noble benefactors, the Perényis, involved men and women. Both Jacob Krause and his wife did business with Baron Perényi during the years preceding and following 1820. A generation later, the Krause's son, Julian, and his wife, Eszter Salomon were in business with Baron Gábor Perényi, the older Perényi's son.

Similarly, Joseph and Elizabeth Underleider, financial agents of Count Samuel Dessewffy, were involved in a protracted dispute that lasted from the spring of 1818 through the summer of 1820 with a local nobleman over a loan of 40,000 forints, which was to be used for the purchase of wine. Elizabeth claimed that she had ordered 150

barrels of ordinary wine and 107 barrels of processed wine, which had never been delivered.⁵¹

More unusual was the case of Sara Solomon, whose relationship with her magnate patron gave her almost complete autonomy from her husband, and may have developed into something more intimate. In 1793, she obtained legal residence in Miskolc without the endorsement of her husband, the wine merchant Jacob Solomon, at the home of another wine merchant, Samuel Jacob.⁵² After her husband died, Sara Solomon took over the family business, except in this case she was allowed to sign documents herself. During one exchange of letters with her benefactor arranging their next meeting, her benefactor requested that they complete the transaction in person rather than through a messenger. In her reply, Sara abruptly abandoned the formal language for addressing nobility and answered that, "Now would be an inopportune time to pay a visit."⁵³

In effect, by facilitating the growth and development of the Jewish community, the magnates appended a market town of magnate-sponsored Jews onto the crown city of Miskolc, a privileged corporation that owed allegiance to the royal crown. Thus Miskolc became two different sorts of towns. For Greek and other Christian merchants, it was a chartered city; for Jews it was a magnate-controlled market town. In this way, the magnates circumvented the privileges of a chartered town that, to borrow from the words of Mack Walker, "often remained outside of politics, self-contained, except as a reactionary," and cultivated a Jewish community that would help them cement their dominance at the local and county level.⁵⁴ More broadly, the political association between magnates and Jews came to be an important symbol in the magnates' victory over the Habsburgs.

By 1820, the Borsod County nobility had forged a symbiotic relationship with Borsod County Jews. The nobility provided political support and economic cooperation; the Jews made them wealthy and diminished the economic importance of rival corporate groups. While several decades would pass before this Jewish-magnate *rapprochement* would fully mature, the crucial first steps had been taken by the early 1820s, when Jews began to provide the magnates with a range of commercial services and leverage in corporate politics.

At the heart of this emerging symbiosis was the Miskolc magistrate, whose protection of Jews was at times more effective than legal rights. The latter could be nullified by a single piece of legislation, as was the case with the ephemeral reform program of Joseph II. Admittedly, the privileges given to Jews by the magistrate on a case by case basis could also be nullified by an act of legislation. However, the gradually improving situation of Jews was never as conspicuous as the sudden changes introduced by legal reforms, thus never elicited the concerted opposition that legal reforms did.

Magnate protection made Miskolc a more attractive place for Jews to settle and earn a living. As the Jews of Miskolc attained financial security and political stability, they began building a community. This entailed, first and foremost, creating a communal infrastructure for the several hundred Jews living in the region. The first step in this direction was taken under the aegis of the *Hevra Kadisha*, the Jewish Burial Society.

Notes

- 1 BAZML/TI/Ui/III/404/A/3, No.12, 1793. This chapter is based largely on two sets of primary sources. The first is a compendium of letters and contracts—seventeen letters in all—between Borsod County Jews and their magnate patron, gleaned from the archives of the Esterházy, Csáky, and Dessewffy families. These families had extensive dealings with Jews in other counties—from which a more extensive correspondence remains, but few records remain from Borsod County, probably because of the upstart nature of magnate–Jewish relations there. Most of the letters from the magnates originated in Debrecen or Kassa, that is, outside of Borsod County. The second set of primary sources is a collection of judicial documents, *Törvényszékek Iratai*/'*Acta Sedralia*, which is divided into two parts: *Ügyviteli iratok* [Documents of the court] consists of cases that came before the Miskolc magistrate, between 1793–1795; and *Raboskodók kimutatásai* [Prison Reports] includes court cases from 1817–1822.
- 2 Éva Gál, “Az óbudai uradalom zsidósága a 18. században” [Jews on the Óbuda Estate during the Eighteenth Century] *Századok* 126/1 (1992) pp. 6–8.
- 3 István Dobrossy, *Miskolc története* III/2, p. 709.
- 4 Dobrossy, *Miskolc története* III/2, p. 710.
- 5 Moshe J. Rosman, “The Role of Non-Jewish Authorities in Resolving Conflicts Within Jewish Communities in the Early Modern Period,” *Jewish Political Studies Review* 12/3–4 (Fall 5761/2000) p. 62.

- 6 Moshe J. Rosman, *The Lords' Jews*, p. 9.
- 7 Gates-Coon, *The Landed Estates of the Esterházy Princes*, p. 63; Gál, "Óbuda Estate," pp. 16–18.
- 8 *Ibid.*, p. 711.
- 9 Gerevich, *Budapest Története* III, p. 117.
- 10 Dobrossy, *Miskolc Története* III/1, p. 469.
- 11 István Dobrossy, "Kereskedő csoportok, családok és dinasztiák Miskolc társadalmában a 18. század elejétől a 19. század elejéig," [Commercial Groups, Families, and Dynasties in Miskolc Society from the Beginning of the Eighteenth Century until the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century] in *Levéltári Évkönyv* [Archive Yearbook] VIII (Miskolc: 1995) pp. 152–162. On the relations between the magnates and Greek merchants see Hanák, "Jews and the Modernization of Commerce," pp. 25–31.
- 12 Hanák, "Jews and the Modernization of Commerce," p. 31; Dobrossy, "Kereskedő," p. 158.
- 13 Dobrossy, *Miskolc története* III/1, pp. 468–469.
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- 15 Dobrossy, "Commercial Groups," p. 153.
- 16 BAZML/TI/ÜI/ 1793 #1020.
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- 21 Sándor Büchler, "De Judeus" in *IMIT* (1900) pp. 290–294.
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- 24 "Letter from János Klinkó to István Csáky," *Magyar Országos Levéltár* [Hungarian State Archive] (hereinafter MOL), P91/cs/18/j13.
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- 27 Dobrossy, *Miskolc története* III/1, p. 468.
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- 29 *Ibid.*, III/2 p. 632.
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- 31 Dobrossy, *Miskolc története* III/2, pp. 692–693.
- 32 Silber, *Roots of the Schism*, p. 100.
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- 34 *Ibid.*, #721, 1821.
- 35 Dezső Danyi and Zoltán Dávid ed, *Az első magyarországi népszámlálás (1784–1787)* (Budapest, 1960) pp. 42–43; Horst Haselsteiner, *Joseph II. Und die Komitate Ungarns: Herrscherrecht und ständischer Konstitutionalismus*. (Vienna–Cologne–Graz, 1982) p. 29.

- 36 Dobrossy, *Miskolc története* III/1, p. 47.
- 37 Éva H. Balázs, *Hungary and the Habsburgs, 1765–1800: An Experiment in Enlightened Absolutism*. (Budapest, 1997) pp. 160ff.
- 38 Ibid., p. 179.
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- 40 Dobrossy, *Miskolc története* III/1, p. 41.
- 41 BAZML/TLAS/ÜI #1373 (1793).
- 42 Mérei and Vörös, *Magyarország története 1790–1848 I*, pp. 245–250.
- 43 See BAZML/TLAS/RK, Case #14, 1821. On a similar discrepancy between contracts involving Jews and lesser nobles in Poland, see Moshe Rosman, *The Lord's Jews*, p. 110ff. Whereas Rosman discovered a formalized difference between the Jew's arrenda and the noble's dzierżawa, there is no evidence of a formal difference in Borsod County.
- 44 Dobrossy, *Miskolc története* III/1, pp. 39–40.
- 45 Ibid., p. 41.
- 46 BAZML/RK., #2105 (1819).
- 47 Ibid., RI #1410.
- 48 The decision of the case is in BAZML/RK, (1822), case #1414.
- 49 BAZML/RI #1383–84 1819. Moshe Rosman has found contacts between Jewish women and magnates in Poland. See Rosman, “Lihyot Isha Yehudit be-Mamlechet Polin-Lita” [To be a Jewish Woman in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth] in Israel Bartal and Israel Gutmann eds., *Kiyum va-Shever* [The Broken Chain] vol. 2 (Zalman Shazar: Jerusalem, 2001); see also Rosman, “The History of Jewish Women in Early Modern Poland: An Assessment” *Polin* 18 (Littman Library: Oxford and Portland, 2005) especially pp. 51–55.
- 50 Ibid., #1300 1818.
- 51 The Krause case comes from the Perényi Family Archive, MOL P1969 #16; the Underleider case comes from the Dessewffy Family Archives, MOL P91 #24.
- 52 BAZML/TLAS #227 1793.
- 53 “Letter from Sara Salomon,” MOL, P1281/cs4.
- 54 Mack Walker, *German Home Towns: Community, State and General Estate, 1648–1817*, (Ithaca and London, 1971) p. 27.

The Hevra Kadisha and the Rise of the Family Syndicate

A seemingly ordinary moment in the development of Miskolc Jewry took place in February, 1812, when the *Hevra Kadisha*, or Jewish Burial Society, elected its officers for the coming year:

At this assembly at the home of [presiding officer] Moshe Katz Ráth, new trustees were elected at the behest of the members ... Moses Katz Ráth as President of the *Hevra Kadisha*, Jacob Berger as first trustee, Gerson Klein as second trustee, Simcha the son of B. as third trustee. And, in addition, five men called *alufim*-deputies were elected: Wolf Brody as First Deputy, Aaron Ber [Lustig], Judah Lieberman, Naftali Beresh, and Moshe Bik as deputies, and along with them two comptrollers (*nichnasim ve-yotz'im*) Jonah Cukerman, and Shlomo Hayat.¹

This election is noteworthy because five of the seven newly elected deputies and comptrollers were among the seven leading Jewish taxpayers in Miskolc—the Jewish commercial elite.² By joining the leadership of the Burial Society, this commercial elite enhanced the leadership of the Burial Society, which had previously dealt only with matters pertaining to burial and attendant religious rituals. The commercial elite also took a first step toward expanding and consolidating its authority over Jews in Miskolc and Borsod County. Hitherto, the commercial elite acted in concert only in the context of a seven-member executive, an ad hoc committee appointed annually by the county solely to assess and collect the Toleration Tax and taxes imposed locally by magnates.

From the outset, this syndicate of families was a semi-open caste accessible to any Jews who had the proper credentials: wealth, commercial connections with nobility, and piety, or at least a willingness to support other pious Jews. Initially, the syndicate included the Brody, Ráth, Lusztig, Czukermendl, and Berger families. During the 1820s they were joined by the Moskowitzs, Domans, Brauns, Resofskis, and Poppers.

The Burial Society's new leadership never acknowledged its expanded role in communal affairs, nor was it ever fully acknowledged by government officials. Rather, it began with these families searching unselfconsciously for complimentary solutions to immediate problems. The initial impetus for the commercial elite to become deputies of the Burial Society was, in part, a combination of religious piety and, in part, demographic; that is, an increase in the Jewish population of Borsod County after 1790, and the wider diffusion of Jews in towns and villages. Individually, neither the commercial elite nor the Burial Society had the means to respond adequately to this increase and diffusion. The commercial elite, in its capacity as the Seven-Man Executive, lacked the manpower to collect taxes from a wider area and from more Jewish communities, despite its extensive financial resources. It also lacked the commanding voice of religious authority and prestige so often helpful in assigning and collecting taxes.

The Burial Society, on the other hand, had the manpower to provide burial services on a county-wide basis, and religious prestige born of its pious reputation, but lacked the financial means to meet its rising costs. Previously, its expenses had consisted of an occasional purchase of new prayer books, a few ritual objects, and the moderate expenses of the Zayin Adar banquet. As their constituency increased and settled in more distant parts of Borsod County, the added costs of travel, lodging, and—when the trip involved crossing into a neighboring county, tolls—outpaced this revenue, especially during the 1810s when these costs reached their highest level in over a century.³ The resulting merger created a lay leadership capable of providing religious services to its constituency while assessing and collecting taxes, thereby maintaining the stable relationship between Jews and magnates.

Prior to 1812, the starting date of the Burial Society's extant protocols, virtually nothing substantial is known about this organization

other than isolated references to the two men directly responsible for the emergence of the family syndicate as the leadership of the Burial Society: Moses Ráth (d. 1821) and Wolf Brody (1770–1841). Ráth and his wife Rebecca were among the founders of the Burial Society in 1767. He was an affluent merchant with a strong connection to István Csáky, a magnate patron; thus he was among the commercial elite. According to a series of poems published in 1803 in honor of his son Meyer, Ráth presided over both the Burial Society and the Seven-man executive at the turn of the nineteenth century, the first step toward their eventual merger. Based on the list of donations and gifts from 1812, the Ráths were the Burial Society's primary source of revenue. He presided over the Burial Society until his death in 1821.⁴

Like Ráth, Brody was also a pious Jew and a successful merchant. Born in Miskolc in 1770, he was the son of immigrants from Ungarisch-Brod in Moravia. By the 1790s, he was a trader in animal hides. By 1820, he was one of three Jews who was permitted to slaughter and sell meat, and one of two to obtain a license to operate a *kosherbank*—that is, to slaughter and sell kosher meat.⁵ From 1808 until his death in 1841, he was the head of the Jewish community, in three different capacities. From 1808 until 1812, he presided over the seven-man executive.⁶ From 1821, when he succeeded Moses Katz Ráth as president of the Burial Society, until 1833, he was the president of the Burial Society. From 1833 until his death, he presided over the Kehilla. In 1825, Brody was appointed presiding officer when the Seven-Man Executive was reinvigorated by the County Sheriff as a county-wide tax-collecting agency on the behalf of the Royal Crown. Brody presided over both until his resignation as Burial Society president in 1832. His resignation in 1832 as Burial Society president to take over the newly revived *Kehilla* marked the end of the Burial Society's de facto leadership, though not its central role in communal affairs. From this point on, the Burial Society was no longer in charge of levying and collecting taxes, but it remained the religious and eleemosynary arm of the community.

There was a subtle difference between Ráth and Brody. Ráth never combined his commercial and political connections with the religious activities of the Burial Society. He was, in other words, a pious Jew and an affluent Jew, but separately. By contrast, Brody integrated the

religious prominence of the Burial Society with the economic and political leadership of the other organizations over which he presided: the seven-man executive during the 1810s, the revived county-wide executive during the 1820s, and the Kehilla during the 1830s. Single-handedly, Brody amalgamated the limited mandates of the Burial Society and these other organizations into a coherent communal and county leadership. First and foremost, he transformed the Burial Society from a purely religious organization supported by charitable contributions into an organization that attracted members by providing benefits and investors by promising a profitable return; and into a political organization capable of intervening with local authorities on behalf of its members.

The first step in this process was the expansion of the Burial Society itself from a strictly religious organization at the beginning of the nineteenth century, into a provider of religious, health-related, and material benefits by the end of the 1820s. These added benefits, coupled with the high moral standards of the Burial Society, created the basis for the syndicate of families to expand their jurisdiction, primarily by presiding over the Burial Society's *bet din*, or tribunal. As the tribunal adjudicated a broader range of benefits, the leaders of the Burial Society acquired the means of coercing the membership and each other.

The challenge for the family syndicate was to insure that the efforts to make the Burial Society more profitable did not undermine its fundamental role as the exemplar of religious piety and morality. The crowning achievement of the Burial Society's leaders was converting the potential conflict between morality and profit into an effective means of coercion. They used the Burial Society's religious prestige and moral code to enforce decisions handed down by the organization's tribunal, whether or not these decisions had anything to do with religious observance or morality.

Leadership by default or by design?

That the Burial Society emerged as a central institution of Jewish communal activity was not surprising, given the pervasiveness of this institution in the Ashkenazic World.⁷ From the sixteenth century onward, no institution was as ubiquitous a presence in Jewish communal

life as the Jewish Burial Society. This pervasiveness was captured in 1855 by Immanuel Löw, a leader of the Szeged Burial Society:

With eminent compassion, Jews have tended to their most personal needs through their communal compassion toward the sick, the dying, and the deceased. This compassion is expressed in the transplanting of the *Hevra Kadisha* to wherever the Jews have resided, and in the survival and flourishing of this holy institution.⁸

Although historians disagree regarding the origins of the Burial Society, they generally agree that, by the end of the seventeenth century, the framework and functions of the burial society were largely in place and were essentially uniform.⁹ The burial society was one of several voluntary associations, or *Hevrot*, that operated under the aegis of the established communal leadership. Voluntary societies were organized by Jews for various purposes such as studying rabbinic texts, visiting the sick, reciting psalms, and burial. The last was known as the *Hevra Kadisha*, or holy society, because Jewish tradition holds this ritual in singularly high esteem.¹⁰

Like other voluntary associations, the burial society provided individuals with an alternative between the community and the family. While all voluntary societies provided community members at once with an additional religious observance and alternative social outlet, only the Burial Society provided a service that virtually all community members solicited at some point. Those who did not belong to the Burial Society would hire it to take care of their burial needs.

In the absolutist states of eighteenth and early nineteenth century Central Europe, moreover, the Burial Society and other Jewish voluntary associations, much like their Christian counterparts, provided an outlet for social and political discontent for those unwilling to challenge the strict censorial limitations on public assemblies and expression.¹¹ The Burial Society, in particular, provided a surrogate form of communal leadership for Jewish communities stripped of corporate autonomy. As Sylvie-Anne Goldberg noted: "In opposition to the legal power that was, significantly, under surveillance of the external authorities and with which the Jews did not seem to identify, an entity arose beyond political divisions which would unite the community in

its social organization and would become the communal organization par excellence: the *Hevra Kadisha*.”¹²

The Miskolc society differed from burial societies in more established communities like Prague in its communal function. In Prague the decline of the *Kahal*, or communal leadership organization, during the seventeenth century created a vacuum in communal leadership that the Burial Society filled until the Kehilla’s resurgence at the end of the eighteenth century.¹³ Similarly, in upstart communities like Miskolc that lacked the usual religious and cultural foci—a Kehilla, synagogue, rabbinate, or house of study—and the means to distribute communal charity and collect communal taxes, local Jews often turned to the burial society for leadership. In Prague, however, the Burial Society managed a pre-existing array of communal institutions during the temporary absence of a fully functioning Kehilla. In Miskolc these institutions took shape under the leadership of the Burial Society itself. Until the end of the 1820s, the Miskolc Burial Society did not operate under the aegis of an established, recognized communal leadership—it was itself the communal leadership. This was not unique to Miskolc but true in other less developed regions as well. Burial societies in eighteenth century Moldavia performed a communal function similar to the one in Miskolc, as a historian of Moldavian Jewry noted:

The burial society discharged the functions of a central community organization, since in the eighteenth century there was no such permanent institution in Moldavia. The central authorities, such as the chief rabbi and the elders (*starosta*) had merely fiscal responsibility and political functions. Hence the Holy Burial Association had to assume many responsibilities that as a rule did not devolve upon it, such as the maintenance of the House of Study, the Talmud Torah, the poorhouse, the public bathhouse, and the Association for Visiting the Sick.¹⁴

Given the preeminence of Prague Jewry, it is not surprising that the dozens of burial societies that formed in Hungary, Bohemia, Moravia, and even Poland during the eighteenth century emulated the structure and operation of the Prague Society. Miskolc was no exception. Among the three books listed in the Miskolc society’s 1812 inventory is *Ma’avar Jabbok*, the manifesto and history of the Prague society.¹⁵

As in Prague and other Central European communities, the membership of the Miskolc Society typically divided into three categories: members, officers, and junior members. Specific membership requirements and benefits varied from place to place, but members were generally expected to contribute one-time initiation and annual membership dues, and to participate in all aspects of burial—washing the body, standing vigil from the moment of death until burial, transporting the body from the home of the deceased to the cemetery, conducting the funeral or, at least, making sure it was conducted properly, and comforting the mourners. They were also expected to attend synagogue services on Jewish holidays and other days of mourning or remembrance, recite memorial prayers and psalms for the deceased on appropriate days of the year, and help maintain the cemetery.¹⁶

These duties demanded not only a willingness to work hard but also a proper spiritual frame of mind. In return, they received certain benefits, including a free burial for themselves and their families and a guarantee that someone would observe the religious requirements of mourning. In the traditional world of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, membership carried a certain prestige since members were assumed to be pious.

For the most part, burial societies were supported by membership dues, donations from affluent local Jews, and fees paid by non-members for burial services. Occasionally a burial society might receive donations from other communities and even from gentiles. The Szombathely burial society, for example, received 1,000 *wiener wendung* from “the important, righteous women Leah Levinstein” of Nagykanizsa, and 20,000 bricks for the cemetery wall from the prominent nobleman Philip Batthyány.¹⁷

The officer corps was elected by a rotating group chosen from among the regular membership, and generally consisted of a presiding officer (*Rosh ha-Hevra*), an additional three trustees (*Gabba'im*), and two comptrollers (*Ro'ey Heshbonot*). As a rule the presiding officer and comptroller were longer-term positions than the trustees, whom the selection committee elected annually.¹⁸ The trustees took turns serving on a three-man tribunal. This tribunal adjudicated primarily matters pertaining to burial. The decisions of the Miskolc tribunal suggest

that the Miskolc Burial Society derived at least some of its statutes from pre-existing Moravian Burial Societies. Regarding burial of non-resident Jews, the Miskolc Burial Society's tribunal issued the following decision: "A man from Nyitra named Leib Deutscher died while en route to our community, and was brought here, and buried here that very day, as is proper." The deceased man's family was charged twice the regular fee for burial.¹⁹ This recalled a statute from the community of Gay, Moravia enacted in 1650: "Whoever comes to a different community and dies there without having established residence, will pay double the burial fee as is charged to residents of the community. And if he is rich the community may charge more than double."²⁰

The junior members, referred to in Miskolc as *Hevra Malatsches* or simply *Malatsches*, were probational members who, after serving faithfully for a period of time, were promoted to full membership. This probational period was common to burial societies well into the nineteenth century. The 1837 Statutes of the Szombathely society included the following: "Whoever joins the burial society from this day forth is obligated to serve as a Malatsche for the first year. After the first year he will be like the other members."²¹ In some communities, such as Pressburg, junior membership was reserved for children: "Young children shall be entered into the communal registry as *Aufwärter*, will eventually be expected to pay the membership fee."²² In Szombathely, promotion depended not only on service and payment, but on marital status: "However, if he is un-wed and has never married he remains a Malatsche until his wedding day and will not cast a vote at meetings."²³ In Miskolc, as is discussed below, the term of service and rising average age of the Malatsches became a source of conflict after 1819.

The three groups of members assembled several times during the course of a year. The entire membership met on festival days when *Yizkor*, the central memorial prayer of the liturgy, was recited in synagogue: the last day of Passover, *Shmini Azeret*, and the second day of *Shavuot*. In addition, at least one meeting was held sometime during the weeks preceding the High Holidays. The officers met approximately once every six weeks, although the precise dates varied from year to year.

Foremost among these meetings was the collective observance of *Zayin Adar*, the seventh day of the Hebrew month of Adar—the date assigned by rabbinic tradition to the death of the biblical Moses. This event was attended by local Jews and by those from remote parts of Borsod county.²⁴ Typically, the day began with an early morning prayer service at which a select group of participants recited memorial prayers and psalms. After the service the trustees and deputies discussed and modified the by-laws of the Burial Society. The other members of the Burial Society and a sizable portion of the Jewish community joined them for a festive meal. The event attracted a large number of participants from the community, not only because of the complimentary food and wine, but also because the day included the induction of new members into the Burial Society, and a public recitation of its expenditures and revenues.

Expanding the benefits of membership

From the outset, the challenge for Brody and the other deputies was to make the Burial Society more profitable within the framework of its by-laws. This meant increasing the revenue of a non-profit organization so as to meet the organization's rising operating costs. During the 1813 fiscal year, for example, the organization's annual revenues barely covered its expenses. It had earned a revenue of 2100 forints, which included outstanding debts collected from the previous year, membership dues, donations and burial fees from non-members. The expenses from the same fiscal year totaled 2046 forints, leaving only 54 forints in the treasury at the beginning of the 1814 fiscal year.²⁵

The Burial Society's budget was strained in the spring of 1814, when hooligans destroyed sections of the cemetery wall and the vineyards owned by the Burial Society, prompting Moses Katz Ráth to ask for increased security. When it became clear that the treasury lacked sufficient funds to cover additional costs, "it was decided that an advance should be procured and in this way assistance would be obtained...Each man who lent money would be a patron. The money would be given to Jonah Czukermendl who will be accountable for the money in the future..." Eight of the top twelve lenders were

Moses Ráth, the five deputies, and the two comptrollers—in other words, the seven-man executive—and the other four were elected deputies or trustees during the following three years. By the end of 1814, the Burial Society was financially indebted to its deputies.²⁶

Table I: Expenses and Revenues of the Burial Society, 1813
(rounded to the nearest forint)

Revenues	
Debts paid to trustees from previous year	1298
Membership dues, pledges, and donations from members	246
Donations from non-members	128
Burial fees paid by non-members	426
Total revenues	2100
Expenses	
Burial costs	364
Planning person receipt	142
Jurors fees (Zadik hadin)	642
Reimbursement to Wolf Brody	489
Zayin Adar banquet	5
Break-Fast Meal for Fast of Esther	103
Purchase of vineyard, paid to Moses Katz Ráth	250
Zayin Adar Sermon	9
Housing for two communal employees	10
Sexton's stipend	3
Scribe's stipend	5
Temporary shelter for the poor	10
Total expenses	2046
Net Balance	54

Source: *Protokol be-Hadash*, (Miskolc, 1814) p. 9:b-10:a #1-4.

Until the end of the 1810s, there was a clear division of responsibility between the commercial elite that dominated the ranks of the deputies, and trustees, who were chosen based on piety and service. Deputies and trustees formed separate tribunals. Questions pertaining to religious matters that had no financial implications—such as the obligation of members to attend religious services on certain days—were decided by the trustees’ tribunal. The tribunal’s lone financial responsibility was giving a complete account of the burial society’s revenues and expenditures during the previous year.

Table II: Contributions to the Burial Society (1814)

Moses Katz-Ráth	100*
Wolf Brody	70*
Aaron Greenfeld	50*
Wolf Burger	50*
Aaron Ber Lusztig	25*
Jacob Győr	50*
Judah Liebschitz	30
Jonah Czukermandl	30*
Samuel Győr	30*
Moses Segal	25
Simcha Braun	25
Isaac Vamos	20
Abraham Tolcsva	15
Wolf Schreiber	15
David Győr	15
Zekel Győr	10
Total	550

* – Officer

Source: *Protokol be-Hadash* p. 10:b #9 (Miskolc, 1814)

What's more, religious and non-religious decisions that affected the Burial Society financially such as allocating charity and the expenses for the *Zayin Adar* banquet were decided either by a tribunal of deputies or by one made up by two deputies and one trustee. An 1819 statute, while allowing the trustees to distribute charity, added: "The trustees are fully allowed to reckon without assigning the matter to the deputies, with the following comment ... They may not disburse in excess of two gulden without three deputies signing the order."²⁷ That the trustees needed authorization to disburse funds was itself not unusual. The Szombathely Burial Society's statutes instructed: "The trustees are not permitted to lend money from the funds of the burial society, even to the poor, without proper authorization."²⁸ The difference is that, while in Szombathely the trustees needed permission from the membership at large, in Miskolc the trustees needed the permission of the deputies.

Moreover, deputies and trustees were selected differently. Trustees were elected every three to six months by the entire membership; the office of Trustee changed hands every two or three years. Deputies

were elected once a year at a special meeting attended by a select group. The same men served as deputies year after year, prompting the scribe of the Jewish community to comment on their “success in monopolizing this office.”²⁹

Table III: The Leadership of the Burial Society, 1812–1841

Name	Years Served	#Years	Trustee	Deputy
Moshe Katz Ráth	1812–1818	President*		
Wolf Brody	1812–1832	12**	4	5
Jonah Zukermandel	1812–1832	21	—	21
Aaron Ber Lustig	1812–1834	15	2	10
Naftali Beresh	1812–1830	13	3	7
Abraham Grünfeld	1814–1836	14	7	7
Aron Stern	1817–1830	11	—	11

* Katz was already president when the protocols begin in 1812.

** Brody was President from 1821 to 1841.

Source: *Protokol He-Hadash*. (Miskolc, 1812–1841).

A more telling difference between trustees and deputies was that the latter were not only the financial arm of the Burial Society, but also its political arm. The deputies’ tribunal assigned and collected taxes paid to the royal crown, to the county, and to the Landed Estate. The deputies also decided on the “gifts” presented annually to local magnates and county officials.

More important perhaps, the deputies, aided by their connections with local magnates, periodically intervened with the local authorities on behalf of Burial Society members. In 1813, for example, Israel, a Jew from the Borsod County town of Edelény, asked the Burial Society to intervene on his behalf with his magnate benefactor, Count Joseph Dessewffy. The Count had refused to pay 200 forints that he owed Israel, because of the latter’s “ostentatious, disrespectful, and indecent demeanor.” In response, Brody convinced Dessewffy to deposit the money in the Burial Society’s treasury until the matter could be resolved. At this point, Jonah Zukermendl, a financial agent of the Dessewffy family and a deputy of the Burial Society, petitioned to invest the 200 forints, “through which the aforementioned capital will be increased by investment.” The Burial Society’s tribunal, in turn,

ruled: "Regarding this request, the *Hevra Kadisha* decided that the petitioner [i.e. Czukermandl] will be given 100 forints while the remaining 100 forints will be deposited into the treasury of the *Hevra Kadisha*, and allotted to the trustees for charitable purposes."³⁰

Thus the syndicate of leading families, in their capacity of deputies, brought their connections with magnates to bear in a more concerted fashion. As it turned out, this was critical during the 1820s, as magnates consolidated their administration through the office of the Miskolc magistrate and, later, through the county diet. The Miskolc magistrate coordinated the resources and interests of magnates, creating a more effective administration in Miskolc. The family syndicate coordinated the resources of leading Jewish families, this creating in Miskolc, for the first time, a comprehensive and sustained Jewish communal administration.

After 1817, Brody extended the influence of the family syndicate to include religious matters by being elected a trustee. By the time Brody was elected president in 1821, the commercial elite dominated the ranks of trustees and deputies. As president, he increased the number of trustees from three to seven.³¹ The syndicate of leading families, whose leadership had been largely financial, now controlled all facets of communal life—including religious matters.

This was a departure from the conventional mode of leadership in a burial society, which had emphasized piety and service over wealth as a prerequisite for leadership. In Miskolc, the effects of this were minimal, as long as Brody and the other leaders were pious Jews who believed in the religious mission of the Burial Society. Later, when it appeared that the leadership had strayed from its religious obligations, the rank and file protested.

During the next decade and a half, Brody and the refashioned leadership expanded the annual revenue by making existing rituals and customs more profitable. When this proved insufficient to cover rising costs, they circumvented the by-laws or re-wrote them outright. To be sure, these modifications altered only customs and rituals that were not specifically religious in nature.

One statutory custom, for example, required the approval of the majority of the membership for all major expenditures. For profit-minded deputies, it was not always practical to obtain this approval,

since it meant waiting weeks or months until the next general meeting. Soon after 1812, they ignored this restriction, allocating “a large sum of money as a loan to repay a pending debt...without prior consent from the members of the Hevra Kadisha...and without even consulting the President.”³²

Similarly, the deputies modified the ritual of auctioning off of a deceased member’s estate. In cases when the deceased had willed the estate to the Burial Society, the latter auctioned off the deceased’s property to the membership. From 1813 on the deputies opened these auctions to the Jewish community at large, yielding more revenue. Opening these auctions to a wider audience further immersed the Burial Society into the affairs of the Jewish community, and brought the Burial Society into conflict with non-members. After the public auction of the estate of Feige, Jonah Czukermendl’s mother-in-law, a relative of the deceased claimed a portion of the estate for himself. The subsequent decision by the deputies’ tribunal reflected an overriding financial concern in this matter:

The Hevra Kadisha investigated regarding the percentage, and gave the petitioner the percentage he requested. The grandchild of the deceased’s heirs asked that the interest that this portion of the deceased’s estate earned from 1814 to 1820 be charged to the Hevra Kadisha. This sum was given to the petitioner.³³

More complicated was the decision to auction off the Burial Society’s vineyards to the community at large, rather than only to the membership, as had previously been the case. Unlike the estate auctions, the sale of the vineyard had a religious implication as well. It was expected and assumed that the purchaser would use the grapes harvested from the vineyards to produce kosher wine. Prior to 1813, this had not been an issue because the purchaser had been a member. After 1813, however, a clause was added to the bill of sale to insure that the use of the wine would not change: “The Hevra Kadisha’s vineyard for the coming season was acquired by Aaron Stern for 16 *wiener wendung* on the condition that the wine produced from the grapes will be kosher and produced at the expense of the Hevra Kadisha...”³⁴

From 1814–1820 the added revenue from the estate auction and vineyard sales increased the net profit of the Burial Society more than

twenty-fold. With the added revenue the leaders increased the benefits of membership. In addition to the standard benefits—proper burial, maintaining the grave, and memorial prayers recited annually for the deceased—by 1820 the Burial Society authorized its two hired physicians and its apothecary to tend to members' medical and pharmaceutical needs. Of the physicians—Joseph Szakmáry—would eventually be appointed first chief physician of Borsod County, suggesting a reasonably good level of medical care. When the other, Doctor Samson, refused to treat a patient, the Burial Society threatened to fire him.³⁵

In addition to added medical benefits, after 1823 the Burial Society provided its members free education for their children and priority in receiving charitable assistance.³⁶ The piety associated with the Burial Society attracted the beneficence of local Jews, who earmarked charitable contributions to indigent members of the Burial Society. In 1818, for example, Berel Hayat willed his estate to the Burial Society, stipulating that “the Burial Society should use 20 forints of the estate to provide the orphan Moses with a tutor, and deliver the rest to the aforementioned orphan upon Hayat's death; except for 20 forints that will help pay for the wedding of the orphan girl Rebecca.”³⁷

The most innovative use of a religious custom to further financial aims, however, was the change in the prosecution of slander. Initially, slanderers had been required simply to issue a public apology. When Moses Yekutiel Klein, brother of Malatsche leader Gershon Klein, slandered a member at the 1820 Zayin Adar banquet, causing “much agitation and inconvenience to the members of the Burial Society,” he was ordered to retract his slanderous words publicly and to beg forgiveness from the entire membership.”³⁸

By 1817, slanderers were threatened with a loss of benefits and a demotion to an inferior membership status. By punishing slander with a deprivation of benefits, this gave wide latitude to the trustees and deputies in subduing insubordination. This was enforced gradually, coincidentally as the benefits of membership expanded and those facing the possibility of being deprived of benefits had more to lose.

By 1822, moreover, those convicted of slander were consigned to the ranks of the Malataches. Meir Lieb Hayat, a full-member, was among the first to receive this penalty: “He shall serve as a *Hevra*

Malatsche for a period of one year, at which time he will be required to beg forgiveness publicly for his offensive behavior and be restored as a full member.”³⁹ This method of penalizing violations was effective because, while Malatsches did not pay annual dues, they received no benefits beyond free burial and the promise that someone would recite memorial prayers on their behalf after they died. Demotion as a punishment for slander was used by other burial societies. In Szombathely, it was reserved after lesser punishments proved ineffective:

Any member of the Burial Society who dishonors the trustees with slander shall be fined four gold *wiener wendung* for the first offense, and shall be forced to beg forgiveness from the entire membership for the second offense. If he shall slander a third time, however, he will lose his privileges as a member and his name will be erased from the protocols.⁴⁰

The real test of the officers’ authority was their ability to enforce the rules of the Burial Society not only on rank and file members but on members of elite families. Two cases during the early 1820s tested their ability to do this. The first came when Jacob Burger slandered Henoch Deutsch at a meeting of deputies and trustees. When Berger refused to comply with the other officers’ insistence that he apologize and pay a fine, they threatened to dismiss him as deputy and withdraw his privileges. When the other deputies did not rally behind him, Burger complied immediately and apologized to Deutsch and then to the entire membership.⁴¹

A similar incident involved Jacob Polak, who maligned fellow deputy Abraham Greenfield following an altercation between the two men regarding a sum of money that Polak owed Greenfield. At the insistence of the deputies, Polak paid the money he owed promptly but he aggravated his moral misconduct by ignoring the trustees’ request that he apologize to Greenfield privately at any of the next three meetings and publicly at the following Zayin Adar celebration. In 1821, the trustees presented him with an ultimatum: apologize and beg forgiveness or they would terminate his benefits. Six months later, two years after the dispute began, Polak publicly apologized to Greenfield and begged forgiveness at the following Zayin Adar celebration. For his intransigence, he was consigned to the rank of *Malatsche* for thirty days.⁴²

By asserting its jurisdiction over matters involving slander, and punishing slander with the loss of benefits, the leadership of the Burial Society laid the foundation for lay leaders to arbitrate all disputes, religious and non-religious alike. In a traditional community like Miskolc, this gave the family elite a large measure of influence and authority. During the 1820s, when the Burial Society was the de facto religious leadership, this development had little consequence. Later, jurisdiction in matters of slander helped lay leaders mediate the heated religious conflicts of the 1860s.

Lionized perhaps by this newfound means of enforcing its statutes, the leadership of the Burial Society looked to extend its influence over the entire Jewish community by arrogating the right to issue a *Hezkat ha-Kehilla*, that is, to determine which Jews could settle and legally obtain certain contracts in Miskolc. An early test of its ability in this regard was the case of Joshua Bereg. After Bereg had served three years as a probational member, it became known that:

Joshua never reached an agreement with the leaders of our community regarding legal residence (*Hezkat ha-Kehilla*) thus he cannot become a full-member of the Burial Society...the following year under the sponsorship of the Burial Society officer Jonah Czukerman, Joshua settled the entire matter regarding legal residence so it can now be understood that Joshua can become a full-member of the Burial Society...⁴³

By 1825, a fee was attached to this process: "Meir Gund has agreed to pay 20 Guldens to the treasury in exchange for *Hezkat ha-Kehilla*. It is understood that he will give one-third of this sum to the treasury of the Burial Society, the first half now and the balance on the next *Zayin Adar*."⁴⁴

There was a serious obstacle to the Burial Society's to determine legal residency. Until the beginning of the 1830s it was possible to obtain legal residence permission directly from the landed nobility, that is, without the endorsement of the Burial Society. As István Dobrossy pointed out:

[City officials] tried to prohibit Jews arriving in the city from settling as they moved in with relatives or acquaintances. Those Jews who presented themselves first to the Landed estate and not to the Jewish executive and obtained a tavern keeper's contract, for example, were often able to obtain protection from their patron, even in they were unknowns or con-men.⁴⁵

In response, Brody appealed to more Jewish residents of Miskolc by allowing them to obtain the benefits offered by membership in the Burial Society, without having to provide the difficult tasks ordinarily required for full membership. In other words, he allowed potential new members to buy their way out of the service requirements associated with being a *Hevra Malatsche*.

The new membership policy recognized the distinct strata in this wave of immigration. For newly arriving Jews who could not afford to buy their way out of the service requirement, the Burial Society offered a conventional means of gaining membership—probational membership and six years of service as a Malatsche. For the minority of immigrants who had sufficient means, the Burial Society allowed them to join as financial investors.

In effect, the new policy divided the Burial Society into investors, whose connection was largely economic—paying dues and receiving an annual dividend; and service-providers, who received free religious rewards in exchange for fulfilling the organization's ritual obligations. In this way, the policy consummated the division of the Burial Society into two symbiotic parts, a trend that had begun a decade and a half earlier with the addition of the deputies to the officer corps. From the end of the 1820s on, the Malatsches met the ritual responsibilities of the Burial Society. Full members invested money and received health and material benefits under the officers' supervision. The actual division between members and Malatsches never divided as neatly as their clearly delineated responsibilities, but, on the whole, this dichotomy was at the heart of the Burial Society for decades.

This bifurcation anticipated a dichotomy among Jews involved with burial that persists to this day. Alongside the traditional Jewish Burial Society, which is still a ubiquitous element in Jewish communal life, there is the Jewish funeral home. The burial society is largely a religious organization whose particular specialty necessitates a business dimension. The Jewish funeral home is primarily a business enterprise whose line of trade necessitates a religious dimension.

The new membership policy, moreover, attested not only to the resourcefulness of leading Jewish families, but also to their malleability, that is, to their willingness to absorb into their ranks upstart individuals that appeared to have the credentials to enter the communal

elite. Among the first to benefit from the new membership policy was Tevel Moskowitz. In 1826, Moskowitz was one of three new members who began a three-year probational period and became a full member in 1829. By the 1830s, Moskowitz would be a perennial communal officer.⁴⁶

The revolt of the Hevra Malatsches

The new membership policy prompted an intense and prolonged backlash that posed the most serious challenge to Brody and the leadership of the Burial Society. In January 1821, on the heels of Wolf Brody's announcement of the new membership policy, the Malatsches issued three demands to the membership of Burial Society and a fourth to the leadership. They asked the membership, first and foremost, to distinguish between unmarried and married Malatsches, that is, to treat the latter like full members: "When a Malatsche gets married or becomes an independent head of a household, he shall be entitled to all the rights and obligations of a Burial Society member, and, shall pay his dues to the treasury of Malatsches." They also asked the membership for greater autonomy within the organization: "For one year after getting married, the Malatsche's entire dues will be deposited into the Malatsche's treasury." In addition, they asked the leaders to allow the Malatsches to place a charity box in the synagogue to collect donations to the Malatsches' treasury. Finally, they asked that the general membership recognize these changes as permanent:

The Malatsches' requests should be affirmed by the Burial Society and signed by its members in order that they last forever...to this end, these statutes should be presented to the members of the Burial Society point by point and ratified by them...so that the Malatsches of our community can be as most well-organized as possible, as in other communities.⁴⁷

That one of the points of contentions was membership dues indicates that there was an economic dimension to this request. This suggests, at first glance, an attempt by the putatively less affluent Malatsches to narrow the economic discrepancy between themselves and the more

affluent officer corps. Yet those who submitted the demands were members of affluent families. Ezekiel Klein, the leader of the Malatsches, was the son of Gershon Klein, an affluent Jew who was also a trustee.

More likely, these demands had a religious and demographic overtone. In traditional communities, which often doled out religious honors according to seniority and marital status, a younger or unmarried man was less likely to receive an honor during the synagogue service than an older or married man. In Miskolc, an 1819 Burial Society statute reinforced this custom: “only full-members can be called to read *maftir*.” Receiving the privileges of membership meant attaining a larger role in the synagogue—a key measure of prestige in the traditional world of Miskolc.⁴⁸

During the 1810s, moreover, most of the Malatsches whom the communal record mentioned by name bore the appellation *ba-Boher*, a title that applied either to a young man or a bachelor. By 1821 virtually all of the Malatsches in the communal record bore the title *Rav*, and some had the title *ba-Na'alah*, or “exalted one.” Although no legal stigma accompanied the designation *ba-Boher*, it nonetheless lacked the honor that titles such as *Reb* or *Rav* conferred on a married man. As long as most of the Malatsches were unmarried, they probably had little trouble accepting a secondary status. During the decade after 1812, this group of young men had matured and married. In 1821 they were asking simply that the Burial Society recognize this fact.

In essence, the officers of the Burial Society acceded to all of the Malatsches’ symbolic demands while denying the request for membership privileges. They allowed the Malatsches to have their own charity box in the synagogue, and to pay nominal dues to a separate treasury. Had they been allowed to pay dues directly to the Burial Society, this would have placed the Malatsches on equal footing with full members. It is not surprising that the Burial Society rejected this request.

This last demand presented the officers of the Burial Society with a dilemma. Although allowing married Malatsches to pay dues would have helped the Burial Society, the cost of compensating the lost labor would have been even greater. For over a decade the Malatsches had performed the lion’s share of the more demanding ritual and religious obligations, and virtually all that required extensive travel.

During the ensuing four years, the Malatsches re-issued these demands multiple times, and added new ones. In each case the Burial Society gave them everything they wanted except for equal privileges: a say in who delivered the sermon on *Zayin Adar*, a separate head table at the *Zayin Adar*, a separate treasury, the right to elect separate officers to preside over Malatsche-related matters. The result was that, in 1825, the Malatsches were still the second-tier of the Burial Society.

Finally, in 1825 the Malatsches intensified their demands by threatening to cease performing their religious and ritual duties—threatening, in effect, to go on strike unless married Malatsches were given full membership benefits. In response, Wolf Brody promised that one-fifth of all revenues would go directly to the treasury of the Malatsches, although one of the deputies would supervise the Malatsches' financial affairs. He also guaranteed that all Malatsches who had no outstanding debts to the Burial Society would automatically become full members after six consecutive years of service.⁴⁹ For the moment, although they did not address the Malatsches' central demand for equal benefits, these stopgap concessions diffused the Malatsches' discontent.

A year later, the Malatsches threatened to withdraw from the Burial Society and form their own. This time, Brody and the other officers discovered a medial position that satisfied the married Malatsches without causing an unbearable financial burden. They modified the requirements for full membership, offering an alternative timetable for becoming a full member: any new member who paid special fees to the Burial Society and the Malatsches could halve his probation period and service requirement from six to three years; and any Malatsche who had served three years or more could pay the fees and become a full member immediately. This satisfied the leaders of the Malatsches, many of who became full members, and largely ended the discontent.

By the end of the 1820s, the officers of the Burial Society extended this policy further. They allowed not only Malataches but any new member to bypass the probational service requirement entirely or partially by paying a corresponding fee. From this point on, more than a dozen new members each year became full members without serving first as Malatsches.⁵⁰ Their motivation was not only to evade the bur-

densome though religiously revered duties of the Malatsches, but to receive full benefits immediately upon entry. In this way, the new membership policy at once satisfied the complaints of married Malataches and the Burial Society's need for more revenue. This was not the first time that a burial society had allowed members to buy out of their service obligation. The Pressburg Burial Society had a similar statute by 1751.⁵¹

The ability of the Burial Society to diminish or eliminate the service requirement without undercutting the services provided was facilitated by the growing pool of new members during the 1820s. The influx of immigrants seeking to join the Burial Society caused a surge in the number of applicants, which eased the burden of their service requirement. By the end of the 1820s, the Burial Society had absorbed enough immigrants into its ranks to meet the ritual needs of a growing Jewish population.

The expanded leadership of the Burial Society during the 1820s marked a transformation in the character of Miskolc Jewry, detectible most clearly in the role of Jewish women in communal affairs. Until the end of the 1810s the Jewish community had functioned much like an extended family with Moses and Rebecca Ráth, acting as parental figures as much a presiding officer and his wife. While never a trustee or a deputy, Rebecca Ráth was referred to as an officer (*kezina*). Her specific function was never indicated clearly but she was a major donor. Four of the twenty-three items in the 1812 inventory were donated by "The officer, Sara Rebecca, wife of Moses Katz Ráth."⁵² The protocol of the Burial Society noted in 1825: "The woman of importance (*Isha ba-Hashuva*) Rebecca Ráth indicated to us that she is donating a silver-embroidered *Parochet* (curtain for the holy ark) to complement the matching *Kaporet* (covering for the holy ark) that she donated last year to the Burial Society."⁵³

As long as the Jewish community numbered only a few hundred, communal burials were like extended family rituals, where virtually everyone knew the deceased personally. She and Moses Ráth were regarded as parental leaders of the community. When the Hevra Kadisha observed its jubilee celebration in 1817, the Jewish community commissioned Joseph Bach, a prominent Jewish writer from Pest, to compose a tribute for the Ráths. It included the following:

Oh Rebecca, crown of women, kind-hearted, generous, benevolent, and a pillar of fortitude. How beautiful is this sister in your couple... Noblest of all mothers! You can perceive the inner stirring of my feelings, which are dedicated to you; you peer through to the depths of my heart filled with reverence for you. Like the moon under the stars, you glitter with beauty and youthful charm, grandeur, and splendor. One look is too great for mortal eyes...Bestow your blessing heavenly father on the pious Rebecca. With heartfelt examination look through to the most hidden secrets, and see the noblest of women, best mother, observant in her actions, and choose her as the ideal of her gender. Grant her long years to the glory of your name, renew her days, and grant her a new zeal for life beside her husband.⁵⁴

The tribunal of the Hevra Kadisha, moreover, generally upheld a widow's right to inherit, even at the expense of the Hevra Kadisha itself: "A local goldsmith died and left his estate to the Hevra Kadisha...when a women, the sister of the deceased claimed the inheritance...it was determined that she is legally entitled to everything minus the costs of burial and a headstone."⁵⁵ The Hevra Kadisha even allowed women to inherit not only property but also their husband's legacy: "The woman Pearl, wife of the late [Hevra Kadisha member] Moses Bik, applied to the members of the HK that her son Isaac be accepted as a *malatsche*...according to the statutes of the Hevra Kadisha, he has been accepted...she has paid the fee to Abraham Greenfield and received the order from the Hevra Kadisha making him a member."⁵⁶ The participation of women in the affairs of the Burial Society, and their ability to secure privileges from it, was a telling indicator not only of the status of Jewish women but of the community itself. While affluent Jewish women maintained their commercial presence and privileges, by the end of the 1920s their role as leaders of the Burial Society receded.

For the Jewish community of Miskolc, the immediate impact of two decades of Burial Society administration was the ability of a collection of individuals who happened to live in the same jurisdiction to coalesce into an organic Jewish community. By the end of the 1820s, the Jewish community of Miskolc was no longer a loose confederation of individual contacts between Jews and noblemen. Here it is useful to paraphrase the words of Mack Walker. "In larger Jewish communities, Jews needed their Jewish neighbors but did not know them. Prior to the rise of the Burial Society, Miskolc Jews knew their

Jewish neighbors but did not need them. During the decade and a half of Burial Society administration, Miskolc Jews knew their Jewish neighbors and needed them.⁵⁷

In a sense, the accomplishments of the Burial Society paralleled those of the Miskolc magistrate. The magistrate was able to absorb Jewish immigrants by protecting those who needed and sought out protection. On the other hand, the magistrate did not have the administrative capability of curbing immigration by locating illegal residents and evicting them. Both the magistrate and the Burial Society would be replaced by the end of the 1820s by administrative bodies capable of regulating the flow of Jewish immigration. The Miskolc magistrate would cede jurisdiction over Miskolc Jews to the County Diet. The Burial Society, at the behest of the county, would be supplanted, by the emergence of a Miskolc *Kehilla*.

While ceding communal leadership by the end of the 1820s, the Burial Society laid the foundation for subsequent communal administration's authority. The Burial Society, lacking state sponsorship, had discovered a measure of authority by increasing and then controlling the benefits of membership. As leading families moved from the Burial Society to successor leadership institutions, they brought this strategy with them. As leaders of the recognized, community-wide leadership council, these families would control a wider array of benefits than they had as leaders of the Burial Society—distribution of kosher meat, seats in the synagogue, access to communal education—and, in turn, their authority would increase accordingly.

While no longer the locus of communal leadership, the Burial Society would remain a key element in communal economy and administration. While its function would change, its structure and operation would continue to develop in the same direction. Freed from the obligations of communal administration, the Burial Society's strategy of investing revenue would yield even higher dividends, helping it to flourish as the fund-raising and eleemosynary arm of the community.

The Burial Society's success in investing its revenue to increase its members' benefits anticipated the rise of the modern style insurance company and health care organization. By the end of the 1820s, the Burial Society invested its membership dues each year in the local economy. The returns on these investments allowed them to hire ad-

ditional physicians and employees, provide education, and distribute more charity to the indigent. Indeed, it is interesting to note that soon after the Burial Society began operating like a modern insurance company, the Takarékpénztár, the first credit and savings bank in Miskolc, was founded in 1845 by Joseph Lichtenstein, whose brother was an officer of the Burial Society.⁵⁸

This constitutes an interesting and noteworthy variation on a theme. The prevailing notion holds that the entrepreneurial segment of Hungarian Jewry, which contributed most prominently to the development of urban and economic life in Hungary, originated from among the more enlightened elements of Hungarian Jewry. Yet, in Miskolc, this Jewish contribution sprang from the Burial Society, the core of traditional Jewish society. Indeed, by 1829, the standard of living of Jews in Miskolc was significantly higher than anywhere else in the county. The per capita income of Miskolc Jews was 11.7 forints in 1829, as opposed to 5.7 forints for Jews elsewhere in Borsod County.⁵⁹ The activities of a once highly insular Jewish institution reverberated even beyond the Jewish community, but not at the expense of its traditional character.⁶⁰

Alongside its role in the economic development of Miskolc, the Burial Society's unwavering commitment to religious observance would remain the backbone of traditional Jewish life for decades. The absence of a prominent rabbinic presence had allowed a seamless coalescence of lay commercial leadership and lay religious leadership. This synergy between wealth and piety would provide stability amidst the emerging tensions and conflicts between tradition and innovation. In the end, the Burial Society transformed the community and was transformed by it, and, in this way, prepared the community for the growing pains and challenges of the 1830s.

The 1830s, however, would bring new challenges that the unofficial leadership provided by the Burial Society would not be able to meet. Growing pressure from county officials to curb the flow of Jewish immigrants into Miskolc and Borsod County would reveal the Burial Society's limited authority over newcomers and non-members. In addition, as Miskolc Jewry grew larger, Miskolc Jews demanded a broader array of communal institutions—schools, synagogues, ritual slaughter, and a rabbinate. The Burial Society, while able to provide

burial to all and other religious services on a case by case basis, had neither the means nor the mandate to erect communal institutions for the entire Jewish community.

Notes

- 1 *Protokol be-Hadash* p. 1:b #1, (February 20, 1812).
- 2 Dobrossy, *Miskolc története* III/2, p. 670.
- 3 Miklós Kamódy, "Postai vonatkozású iratok Miskolc város levéltárából (1817–1867)," [Records pertaining to postal relations in the Miskolc municipal archive] in Csaba Csorba ed., *Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén levéltári évkönyv VI*, (Miskolc, 1990) pp. 307–308.
- 4 David Blumenfeld, *Mahberet David ben Yosef le-kehevod talmido Me'ir Ráth* [Hebrew] (Miskolc, 1813).
- 5 Dobrossy, *Miskolc története* III/1, pp. 468–469. On Brody's activities as a dealer in animal hides, see BAZML/ TIAS (1792). Three times during the 1790s, Brody was involved in a suit over animal hides—twice as plaintiff, once as defendant. In addition, Joseph Ráth was licensed to operate two *Fleischbanken*.
- 6 Since he was not the head of the Burial Society until after Moshe Katz-Ráth's death in 1821, and since the only other communal organization in 1812 was the seven-man executive, it stands to reason that, from 1808 on, Brody was the head of the seven-man executive. On Brody as head of the Jewish community, see, for example, Péter Ujvári, *Magyar Zsidó Lexikon* (Budapest, 1929) p. 140.
- 7 The definitive work of the rise and impact of the Jewish burial society is Sylvie-Anne Goldberg, *Crossing the Jabbok: Illness and Death in Ashkenazi Judaism in Sixteenth through Nineteenth Century Prague* (Berkeley, 1996); also useful is Jacob Marcus in his still useful *Communal Sick-Care in the German Ghetto* (Cincinnati, 1978); and Michael E. Panitz, *Modernity and Mortality: The Transformation of Central European Responses to Death, 1750–1850*, Ph.D. dissertation (Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1989).
- 8 Imanuel Löw, *A Szegedi Hevra Kadisa* (Szeged, 1868) p. 1.
- 9 *Ibid.*, p. 75ff. Goldberg roots the emergence of the burial society in the spread of Lurianic Kabbalah. *Crossing the Jabbok*, pp. 87–92. Marcus emphasized the parallel development of Christian benevolent societies: "In their form, organization, general purposes, and goals, they were replicas of the typical medieval religious guilds." Jacob Marcus, *Communal Sick Care in the German Ghetto* (Cincinnati, 1978) p. 75; others see the origins of the burial society as a combination of the two factors. See David Ruderman, "The Founding of a 'Gemilut Hasadim' Society in Ferrara in 1515" *AJS Review*, I (1976):200–239; and Elliot Horowitz, *Jewish Confraternities in Seventeenth Century Verona: a Study in the Social History of Piety*, Ph.D. dissertation (Yale University, 1982).

- 10 On the role of voluntary associations, see Jacob Katz, *Tradition and Crisis: Jewish Society at the end of the Middle Ages*. Translated by Bernard Cooperman (New York, 1993) pp. 129–131.
- 11 Robert Nemes, *The Once and Future Budapest* (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2005) p. 30.
- 12 Goldberg, *Crossing the Jabbok*, p. 88. See also Arno Herzog, “Die Juden Breslaus im 18. Jahrhundert” in Manfred Hettling, Andreas Reinke, and Norbert Conrads eds., *Im Breslau zu Hause? Juden in einer mittel-europäischen Metropole der Neuzeit* (Hamburg, 2003) pp. 49–50.
- 13 Goldberg, *Crossing the Jabbok*, pp. 66–68.
- 14 Abraham Lachower, “Jewish Burial Associations in Moldavia in the 18th and the Beginning of the 19th Centuries” *YIVO Annual of Jewish Studies* 10 (1955) p. 305.
- 15 *Protokol be-Hadash* p. 1:b. On *Ma’avar Jabbok* and its impact, see Goldberg, p. 88.
- 16 Menial tasks such as grave-digging carried out by local Jews or gentiles hired by the Burial Society. See Max Schay, ed., “Die Protokolle der ‘Chewra Kadisha’ der jüdischen Gemeinden in Pressburg” *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte der Juden in der Tschechoslowakei* vol. 3:2 (1933) p. 70.
- 17 “Statutes of the Burial Society of the Holy Community of Szombathely from the Year 1837,” p. 1.
- 18 In Ujhely, the presiding officer was titled chief trustee. Israel Goldberger “The establishment of the Burial Society in Ujhely and its First Statutes” [Hebrew] *Magyar Zsidó Szemle XXVIII* (Hebrew Section, 1911) p. 132.
- 19 *Protokol be-Hadash* p. 41:a #13 (August 24, 1825).
- 20 Israel Halprin ed., *Takanot Medinat Mehren* [The Statutes of Moravia] (Jerusalem, 1952) p. 81 no. 203.
- 21 “Statutes of the Burial Society of the Holy Community of Szombathely from the Year 1837” p. 2.
- 22 Max Schay, “Chewra Kadisha’ der jüdischen Gemeinden in Pressburg” p. 74.
- 23 “Statutes of the Burial Society of the Holy Community of Szombathely from the Year 1837,” pp. 3–4. The term “*Malatche*” derives from the Polish word *Male*, or young. In other communities juniors members were referred to as *Aufwarter*, *Meshammeshim*, and *Mlady*. They performed most of the menial work, while their more experienced mentors handled the technical aspects of burial. Marcus, *Communal Sick Care*, pp. 99–102.
- 24 *Protokol be-Hadash*, p. 37:a #8 (February 12, 1823). Not all burial societies convened their annual banquet on this day, but the general practice of an annual banquet is universal and the chosen date was often *Zayin Adar*. For a list of festival and fast days observed by various burial societies, see Marcus, *Communal Sick Care*, pp. 257–258. For a list of communities in Moravia and Hungary who observed *Zayin Adar*, see Löw, *Szegedi Chewra*, p. 37.
- 25 *Protokol be-Hadash*, 9:b-10:b #6-9. (March 2, 1814).
- 26 *Ibid.*, p. 10:b #9 (February, 1814).
- 27 *Protokol be-Hadash* p. 22:b #10 (28 February 1819).

- 28 "Statutes of the Szombathely Burial Society," p. 4, #18.
- 29 *Protokol be-Hadash*, pp. 25:b #1 (January 30, 1820).
- 30 *Protokol be-Hadash*, p. 3:b #18 (May 19, 1812).
- 31 *Protokol be-Hadash*, p. 29:a (January 18, 1821). Wolf Brody's election to the presidency is #1; the increase in the number of trustees is on 29:b #2.
- 32 *Protokol be-Hadash*, 4:b #1, (April, 1813).
- 33 *Protokol be-Hadash*, p. 20:a #13. (July, 1818).
- 34 *Ibid.*, p. 37:b #20 (July 30, 1823).
- 35 *Ibid.*, p. 20:b #12 (Summer 1818).
- 36 *Ibid.*, 37:a #11. (February 12, 1823).
- 37 *Ibid.*, p. 21:a #16. (October 27, 1818).
- 38 *Ibid.*, p. 26:b #8 (February 28, 1820). Six months later, in a similar incident between Joseph Altman and Issachar Frankel, the tribunal ordered both men to issue a public apology and fined ten kreuzers apiece. *Ibid.*, p. 28:b #19. (October 10, 1820).
- 39 *Ibid.*, p. p. 32:b #30. (February 7, 1822).
- 40 "Statutes of the Szombathely Burial Society," p. 3 #12.
- 41 *Protokol be-Hadash.*, p. 26:b #8 February 28, 1820.
- 42 *Ibid.*, p. 32:b #29. March 8 1822.
- 43 *Protokol be-Hadash*, p. 25:a #20 (October 10, 1819).
- 44 *Protokol be-Hadash*, p. 41:a #16 (October 2, 1825).
- 45 Dobrossy, *Miskolc története* III/2, p. 626.
- 46 *Protokol be-Hadash*, p. 48:a #16 (January 19, 1829).
- 47 *Ibid.*, pp. 29:a-30:b #4. (January 18 1821).
- 48 *Ibid.*, p. 25:b #21 (October, 10 1819).
- 49 *Protokol be-Hadash*, p 31:a #12. (February 11, 1821)
- 50 See, for example, *ibid.*, p. 48:a #17-20. (January 18, 1829).
- 51 Max Schay, "Die Protokolle der 'Chewra-Kadisha' der jüdischen Gemeinde in Pressburg" p. 79 #17.
- 52 *Protokol be-Hadash*, p. 1:a.. Other women donated items as well. Chava Liebersohn, wife of Judah Liebersohn, donated a silver dispenser used for ritual purity. Pearl Bach, wife of Joseph Bach, donated silver needles.
- 53 *Ibid.*, p. 25:a #18. (October 10, 1819).
- 54 Joseph Bach, *Ebe-Jubileum des Moses und Rebeca Rath*. (Miskolc, 1817) pp. 8–9.
- 55 *Ibid.*, p.66:b #44. (October 9, 1832).
- 56 *Ibid.*, p. 26:b #10 13 (February 28, 1820).
- 57 Walker, *German Home Towns: Community, State, and General Estate, 1648–1817* (Ithaca and London) 1971, p. 33.
- 58 István Dobrossy, *Miskolc: Irásban és Képekben* vol. 2 p. 66. *Protokol be-Hadash* p. 34:b #18 (July 21, 1822).
- 59 Dobrossy, *Miskolc története* III/2, p. 631.
- 60 An example of the prevailing view is László Varga, "Manfred Weiss: The Profile of a Munitions King," in Silber, *Jews in the Hungarian Economy*, pp. 196–199.

Jews in the Time of Cholera: The Epidemic of 1831 and its Aftermath

The year 1836 brought mixed developments in the legal status of Miskolc Jews. In March the county diet revived the town's charter. The burghers of Miskolc regained most of the privileges that they had lost in the 1755 Grassalkovics Agreement, and obtained some new ones. The city council, no longer beholden to the landed estate, was given the authority over the judiciary, including the composition of the magistracy and the rules for electing judges. In April, the Borsod County Diet recognized the Jewish Artisans Guild, placing it on equal footing with Christian guilds.¹

These two legislative acts appear contradictory and enigmatic. The renewal of the charter facilitated efforts by the town council to impede Jewish settlement. The recognition of a Jewish guild encouraged Jewish artisans, the quintessential bane of the Christian artisans who dominated city politics, to settle in Miskolc. By singling out Jewish artisans, moreover, these legislative acts allowed the city to exclude Jews except those whom it most wanted to exclude.

The apparent contradiction between these two laws was echoed in the reforms enacted by the National Assembly in 1840. In the spring of 1840, the National Assembly enacted Law 38, which granted native-born and legally residing Jews the right to reside anywhere in the kingdom except the mining towns, to set up factories, and to engage in crafts.² On the other hand, Law 38 distinguished between native-born and foreign Jews, between legal and illegal Jewish residents, and between productive and unproductive Jews, the same law made it clear that certain types of Jews were welcomed, and others were not.

The resolution between these contradictory legislative currents lies in the events of the Cholera Epidemic of 1831 and in the ensuing peasant uprising. The impetus for changes in the status of Jews and towns such as Miskolc emerged most vividly in those regions where the epidemic hit hardest. The northeastern corner of Hungary, the most backward region in the kingdom, suffered the worst. Miskolc, near the heart of this region, was a focal point of this effort to improve local government. During the epidemic and in its immediate aftermath, the lines between city, county, and royal government blurred as Borsod County officials filled the administrative vacuum left by royal officials too distant and few in number to respond effectively and city officials whose incompetence and political impotence were exposed in the face of a natural disaster. For six months between June and November 1831, Miskolc was governed by county officials.³ Although the pre-epidemic legal status quo resumed by the end of 1831, county officials began to rethink their attitudes toward Jewish immigration in an effort to regulate population growth—an emerging indicator of efficient government. By decade's end, regulating the size of Miskolc Jewry would become a fixture in the county's effort to restore order.

The restrictions on Jewish immigration, no less than the expansion of Jewish communal organization, were part of a larger effort during the 1830s to restore order and improve local government in Miskolc and Borsod County after the decade's tumultuous beginning. That the Jewish population of Miskolc quadrupled during the 1830s was deemed by county officials as a threat to stability and productivity. The solution, they discovered by decade's end, was to co-opt the support of Jews by expanding Jewish communal organization. A first step in this direction was recognizing the Jewish Artisans Guild.

The outbreak of cholera that swept across Europe in the summer of 1831 left a trail of misery and hardship.⁴ Earlier epidemics had been regarded as inescapable acts of divine will, before which humanity was powerless. The epidemic of 1831, in sharp contrast, came at a time when a growing number of people believed that scientific knowledge and human reason could subdue the terrifying effects of nature; and when medicine had advanced to the point where cholera appeared

conquerable. Scores of physicians and epidemiologists throughout Europe descended on areas struck by cholera. Having never studied the infection up close before, they could not agree whether the epidemic spread through infection or contagion. Quarantine, the conventional means of containing epidemics, was ineffective because cholera spread through contaminated water. Physicians were a half-century from determining the actual cause of the infection, thus their success in containing the epidemic of 1831 was limited and irregular.⁵

Like earlier epidemics, the spread of cholera was ascribed by a medically and scientifically ignorant populace to the shortcomings of the lesser elements of society: the substandard hygiene of the poor, the impiety of infidels and heretics, and the intrusive presence of transients, strangers, and Jews. Such accusations at once satisfied the simplistic Christian beliefs of the masses and provided ruling elites with a convenient “reason” for their inability to control the spread of infection. Even the nineteenth century advance in science and medicine did not preclude a surge of popular hostility toward Jews and other elements of society during cholera outbreaks, sentiments that would re-appear during outbreaks of cholera throughout the nineteenth century, even in more progressive countries. As late as 1892, the epidemic that hit New York City caused an outcry against “infectious immigrants,” and led city officials to quarantine immigrant Jews, illustrating that even a more enlightened society could be susceptible to baseless fear and contempt in times of hardship.⁶

Like subsequent outbreaks of cholera, however, the epidemic of 1831 struck across social and religious boundaries, affecting alike rich and poor, native and alien, Christian and Jew. The unsightly symptoms of cholera made it difficult for elite members of society to conceal or soft-pedal its effects, momentarily blurring the distinctions between privileged and un-privileged individuals. In an “age of beautiful death” cholera was ugly.⁷ In the words of Richard J. Evans,

the symptoms of cholera were peculiarly horrifying to nineteenth century bourgeois sensibility... Even typhoid, despite some unpleasant symptoms, was considered socially acceptable and claimed a number of prominent victims... Not so cholera. The blue ‘corrugated’ appearance of the skin and the dull sunken eyes of sufferers transformed their bodies from those of recog-

nizable people, friends, family, relatives, into the living dead within a matter of hours. Worse still, the massive loss of body fluids, the constant vomiting and defecating...were horrifying and deeply disgusting in an age which, more than any other, sought to conceal bodily functions from itself.⁸

Most of the fatalities from cholera, moreover, resulted not from infection but rather from dehydration and other complications caused by poor living conditions. The impact of the epidemic of 1831 varied widely across the continent. As a result scientists and statesmen attributed higher fatality rates to the inability of state and local governments to act swiftly enough to treat the symptoms of the illness. Accordingly, the level of devastation became a shibboleth that distinguished more advanced states from their backward European neighbors.⁹ The havoc that resulted from the epidemic demonstrated not only how inadequately government officials functioned in a time of crisis, but also intensified the determination of those statesmen who felt a pressing need to implement political and social reforms.

In Hungary, one of the more backward states in Europe at that time, the effects of the epidemic were especially harsh and the number of fatalities high. In Debrecen, for example, 5% of the local population, 2,152 individuals, died from cholera or its complications. Although this was a vast improvement over the devastating effects of the 1738 epidemic of Bubonic Plague, which had claimed the lives of more than one-third of the population, it was still far worse than in cities in Western and Central Europe.¹⁰ The contrasting response to the epidemic in Hungary and more progressive regions filled leading Hungarian noblemen with a growing contempt for the backwardness of their domains and the reactionary mood of their compatriots. Even the violent peasant uprising that followed on the heels of the epidemic quelled this impulse only temporarily. The devastation caused by the epidemic stirred them to reconsider laws and policies that impeded state and local government from responding effectively.

Joseph Szakmari: The nobleman-physician

The cholera epidemic of 1831 was part of a larger pandemic that had originated in India in 1817, reaching Russia by 1826 and Poland by 1830. Despite efforts by Russian and Habsburg troops to contain the epidemic in Poland, it crossed the border along with refugees from the Polish uprising of 1830. “*A Cordon Sanitaire*,” noted Charles Rosenberg, “enforced by heavily armed troops failed to halt the spread of the disease westward.”¹¹ As István Dobrossy noted: “State officials tried in vain to isolate the Northeastern Counties because the disease was spread further by carters and rafters along rivers. The epidemic reached Pest unbelievably quickly and did not spare Vienna.”¹² The epidemic reached Sáros and Zemplén Counties in April of 1831, hit neighboring Borsod County in late June, and then spread rapidly across the entire county. Within a month, the epidemic had engulfed even those towns furthest from the point of entry.¹³

In one sense, Miskolc seemed prepared to respond effectively to this crisis. Borsod County, like most other counties, had established the office of county physician by 1790 and deputy chief physician in 1829, both of which were stationed in Miskolc. These positions carried a certain prestige, ranked just below county engineers, and receiving the same salary as a chief magistrate. In addition, the number of local physicians in Borsod County had risen by more than fifty percent between 1790 and 1820. Thus, there was a certain presumption that these physicians would have sufficient authority to handle this medical crisis.¹⁴ Indeed, in Borsod County the deputy sheriff Joseph Szathmáry-Király’s first response was to appoint a so-called *choleralis deputatio*, a “standing commission appointed in the matter of containing the epidemic.” This commission consisted of sixteen commissioners stationed in the larger towns of Borsod County and was headed by Joseph Szakmari, first chief physician (*első főorvos*) of the county.¹⁵

The commission’s first response, as with other types of epidemics, was to quarantine infected individuals to stop the spread of infection. Not surprisingly, this proved to be ineffective. As a result, the initial reports of the commission were dire, most of all in Miskolc: “Illness is present in 80 locations. Daily 300 are infected and 30 dead... In Miskolc, where the city populace is in such disarray, it is not possible to

maintain order because of the *insufficiently clever councilman*.” The commission’s request for assistance from the royal crown was unheeded, as one commissioner noted, “The Royal Commission was more actively engaged in Pest, while we had to wait.”¹⁶

At this point, Szakmari advised the deputy high sheriff to restrict travel between towns and villages. He also asked a local official in each town to locate new arrivals and quarantine them from the rest of the population. To his dismay, Szakmari discovered that the county lacked the administrative apparatus and authority to execute even these basic tasks. In most towns, local nobles or burghers blocked the encroachment of the county government into local affairs. In one case, Szakmari received a note from a town requesting assistance and, in the same letter, imploring him not to interfere.¹⁷

Two types of towns suffered most from the epidemic: towns whose remote location delayed county assistance; and those that were especially overcrowded. The town of Szentpéter, located in an isolated corner of Borsod County far from the nearest river or major roadway, met the first criteria. As the deputy-physician reported to Szakmari, most of the fatalities occurred over a week after their initial infection, from dehydration. A more ample water supply, the physician concluded, might have reduced the number of fatalities considerably.¹⁸

The village of Hejőcsaba met the second criterion, but was no less ill-fated than Szentpéter. Hejőcsaba, located on the Sajó River, was virtually a suburb of Miskolc and was easily accessible by carriage and by boat. Because of its location, the town had attracted many migrants, who had moved to Hejőcsaba to seek employment in nearby Miskolc. As a result, the population of Hejőcsaba had increased rapidly in the decades preceding 1830, and the town was terribly overcrowded by the time the epidemic arrived. These conditions in Hejőcsaba undermined attempts to control the spread of the disease. The town had an ample water supply, but its almost non-existent streets and chaotic array of shanties and hovels prevented medical workers from bringing fresh water to the victims who needed it most. Within ten days after the outbreak of the epidemic in Hejőcsaba, the town had numerically one of the highest death tolls in the county.¹⁹

Miskolc combined the worst aspects of Hejőcsaba and Szentpéter. Like Hejőcsaba, the population of Miskolc had grown rapidly during

the decade preceding 1831, leading to a sprawling urban expansion. Like Szentpéter in Borsod County, Miskolc was isolated from the medical centers of Hungary. Towns of comparable size located closer to Budapest received support from a royal commission authorized to respond to the epidemic. Miskolc, though large enough and sufficiently struck by cholera to merit assistance from the royal commission, had a lower priority than other towns. As one physician noted: "Thousands of souls were lined up during the height of the epidemic; but, with respect to receiving medical assistance and apparatus, we did not receive our *particulariussa* from above; the royal commission was active in Pest, while we had to wait."²⁰ The epidemic did not spare the county seat and, in fact, infected more individuals in Miskolc than in any other town in the county. However, the number of cholera fatalities in Miskolc was proportionately among the lowest in the county. In retrospect, the relatively low death rate attested to the ability of local officials in Miskolc to carry out Szakmari's instructions promptly and effectively, and to the assistance of the Jewish community and, in particular, the invaluable aid provided by the Jewish Burial Society.

Szakmari's relationship with the Burial Society began a decade before the epidemic:

at this meeting, Wolf Brody announced that he had hired county physician Doctor Szakmari for one year, in place of Doctor Hekel...the deputies want to keep Doctor Hekel, because he had handled the medical problems of the members assiduously for several years. In this regard, if Doctor Hekel remains at his post for another year, aren't the members of the Burial Society missing out on county physician [i.e. Szatmary] who is known to be the superior candidate in every other respect?²¹

Throughout the 1820s, Szakmari and members of the Burial Society worked together caring for sick Jews throughout the county. Even after Szakmari agreed to serve as county chief physician, he continued to work for the Burial Society and receive an annual stipend. As first chief physician during the cholera outbreak, he turned to the Burial Society for help in combating the epidemic.

Szakmari's connection intensified during the cholera epidemic as he called on Miskolc Jews for help procuring brandy. Along with other attending physicians, Szakmari was searching for a way to coun-

teract the dehydrating effects of the cholera infection. By trial and error he concluded that pálinka, Hungarian brandy, in some way mitigated against dehydration. With this in mind, he began a campaign to acquire as much pálinka as quickly as possible.²²

In July 1831 Szakmari discovered a dearth of pálinka in Borsod and neighboring counties, and asked a number of Jewish merchants to obtain it for him by whatever steps necessary. During the first week of August 1831, the deputy high sheriff received several complaints from local Christian merchants that their Jewish competitors were smuggling pálinka into Borsod county from neighboring Abaúj county without paying the proper tolls.²³

In response, Szathmáry-Király sent a commissioner to investigate the matter. The commissioner confirmed the validity of the complaint when he caught Joseph Marcus, a Jewish merchant from Hejőcsaba, returning to Borsod county with several wagons full of pálinka. In his report, the commissioner, a lesser noble named András Büdy, explained that “the commissioner knows that First Chief Physician Szakmari needs more pálinka by this Tuesday morning, and he will await the decision of the deputy high sheriff before taking further action.”²⁴ At this point, Szakmari asked Szathmáry-Király to grant Jews greater latitude in commerce, particularly in the buying and selling of pálinka. The matter was dismissed and evidently the bootleggers received no penalty.

Szakmari also arranged with the Jewish Burial Society to help bury cholera fatalities. Shortly after the outbreak of epidemic, the leaders of the Burial Society allocated land for this purpose:

Regarding the spread of the cholera illness, a plot of land was given...god forbid it should appear among the masons in the cemetery...One strip of land from the vineyard of the Burial Society will be allotted to the wall of the cemetery so that all the victims of the illness can be buried there.²⁵

Szakmari also arranged to quarantine cholera victims in the synagogue. The synagogue was entirely enclosed, spacious enough to quarter several dozen people, and conveniently located near the town square. There, Szakmari and the other physicians attended to the needs of the sick and monitored their conditions. The Jews leased the

synagogue to the county at 25 forints per month for the months of July and August, stipulating that the county would be responsible for any and all damage to the synagogue while it was in the hands of the county.²⁶

Interestingly, physicians in other towns, too, used synagogues to quarantine cholera victims. In Debrecen, the Jews leased the synagogue to the city during the epidemic. This was remarkable because, although Jews had no official permission to reside in Debrecen, or even to spend the night there, they had tacitly secured permission to build a synagogue. While housing cholera victims there, city officials were apparently willing to overlook the violation of the ban on Jewish settlement in Debrecen.²⁷

The emergence of Szakmari as a leading county official and his close working relationship with the Jews added a dimension to noble leadership and noble-Jewish relations. Szakmari came from an impoverished noble family that had negligible land holdings. He was among the scores of petty young nobles who chose to enter one of the free professions such as medicine or law, rather than endure the humiliation of share-cropping on the estate of a more affluent nobleman. He bore a greater resemblance to *honoratiore*s, commoners who had attained certain privileges because of their education, than to other noblemen. His official noble title may have granted him certain advantages, but in reality Szakmari was less a nobleman and more a physician and professional.²⁸ The invitation from the deputy high sheriff to serve as first chief physician, an office that usually went to a more prominent nobleman, elevated Szakmari's rank and status, and afforded him a measure of influence with Szathmáry-Király that his lesser noble rank would otherwise not have allowed.

In a sense, Szakmari's rise in the ranks of the nobility and his growing influence over county affairs paralleled the rising prominence of certain Jews during the 1820s. Just as capable Jewish businessmen and financial agents obtained preferential treatment from a noble benefactor that at times elevated the rights of the Jew over the rights of a nobleman, so, too, did Szakmari enjoy privileges that transcended his official rank. There was, of course, a difference between Szakmari and these fortunate Jews. The Jews received their preferential treatment unofficially and on an ad hoc basis. Szakmari, because he actu-

ally belonged to the nobility, received his appointment officially and openly.

Beyond his professional relationship with the Jewish community as a whole, Szakmari seems also to have developed a personal friendship with a Jewish physician, Herr Doctor Grünfeld. Such friendships differed from the limited camaraderie between Jews and their noble patrons. The latter remained largely unequal, skewed in favor of the magnate. The Jew was aware that, on a whim, his patron could have him imprisoned, evict him from the county, or remove his commercial license. Although Szakmari held an important position in the county hierarchy, after the epidemic he lacked the authority to harm Jews in any way. Even during the epidemic, he needed the consent of the deputy high sheriff to do anything out of the ordinary. Szakmari and his Jewish associates were as close to being equals as was possible in the complex Hungarian social hierarchy.

The peasant uprising

Although the physical effects of the epidemic subsided by September 1831, the aftershocks continued for several months. A new wave of pandemonium swept across northeastern Hungary as peasants erupted into violence, characterized by George Barany as “the most violent peasant uprising in Hungarian history since the Dózsa Rebellion in 1514.”²⁹ Historians generally attribute the peasant riots to the misery caused by the epidemic aggravated by peasant unrest in neighboring Galicia. When the Polish Rebellion of 1831 failed and soldiers arrived to quell the riots, scores of Polish peasants fled across the border from Galicia into Hungary. These peasants, who had brought the cholera infection into Hungary at the beginning of the summer, now rallied their fellow peasants in Hungary to revolt against the landlords they despised.³⁰

The misery and fear that accompanied it animated the hostility and discontent among peasants. During the epidemic, rumors had spread faster than the infection itself. For example, many peasants believed that Jewish tavern keepers adulterated the brandy they served to peasants in a way that would cause madness, dehydration, and death.

There was an ironic kernel of truth behind this rumor, since Jewish tavern keepers, at Szakmari's request, were preparing pálinka to be used as a treatment for cholera victims. As one contemporary observer noted, "Local officials, when they were unable to obtain the necessary apparatus to mix the pálinka, asked Jews to mix the healing solution in their taverns. From this arose the accusation of the poisoning of drinks [*italok megmérgeztése*]." ³¹

By October 1831, peasant violence had spread throughout northeastern Hungary. In Miskolc, vandals destroyed the walls around the town square and the walls adjacent to the Jewish cemetery on three separate occasions. Despite anti-Jewish rumors, peasants did not focus their hostility exclusively against their Jewish neighbors, but toward everyone who allegedly perpetrated crimes against peasants: Jews, nobles, physicians, and Catholic priests. More than anything else, the peasants hungered for land and sought to liberate themselves from the harsh rule of noble landlords. Unlike other peasant uprisings, when Jews bore the brunt of hostility because the actual landowners were absentee landlords, many nobles in this region lived on their own estates. They were present when riots broke out, leaving the peasants no reason to vent their frustration on Jews or anyone else. Thus, while Hungarian noblemen remembered this riot as the worst in over 300 years, Jews escaped relatively unscathed.

The peasant uprising frightened local nobles, some of who regarded the uprising as a warning that innovations of any kind would encourage further violence and mayhem. Other were convinced of the need to undertake reforms. As George Barany noted:

Although the uprising stunned the country and tended to polarize public opinion, it nevertheless appears to have helped rather than hindered those in favor of change. In calling attention to the urgency of reforms lest the nobility resign its leading role in shaping Hungary's future...making the country and its privileged classes even less independent than they had been before. This mixed attitude among the noblemen was most prominent in northeastern Hungary, where the epidemic and uprising had been most intense, and influenced their attitudes toward their Jewish subjects as well. For the most part, because Jews had not only refrained from joining in the peasant violence but also supported the attempts of the nobility to restore order, nobles continued to regard Jews as loyal, law-abiding subjects. ³²

Nobles vacillated between a desire to govern more efficiently and a fear of peasant violence. Within two years, the fear of peasant riots had diminished amidst the day-to-day concerns of governing the region, and conditions for Jews in northeastern Hungary slowly improved. Nobles continued to look askance at peasants, but, as they surveyed the damage caused by the cholera epidemic and the peasant riots, they began to search for ways to improve the living conditions of all of their subjects.

Population growth reconsidered

The months of epidemic and rioting brought Hungarian noblemen face to face with the daunting proof that certain changes were imperative. That both the epidemic and the peasant uprising had originated in Galicia made it clear that the flow of immigrants from Galicia into Northeastern Hungary, particularly the influx of Galician Jews, had to be more closely regulated. This marked a departure from the prevailing noble attitude toward Jewish immigration. Since the end of the eighteenth century nobles had regarded Jewish immigrants, regardless of origin, as an essential component of enlarging the taxable population, rebuilding commerce, and repopulating the region, and had done little to restrict it.

The shift in attitude began even before the epidemic. In an 1830 address to the Szatmár County Diet, Ferenc Kölcsey noted the economic hardships caused by an influx of Jews from Galicia on the people of Szatmár County. In doing so, he questioned the eighteenth century presumption that Jews are inherently beneficial to commercial development:

There is no cause of the impoverishment of the taxpaying population more menacing than the obvious increase of Jews...There is no one who has not contemplated the large increase of Jews in neighboring Galicia. I am far from returning to the fears that Eisenmanger and other intellectuals disseminated. But I mention without fear the dreadful picture...of Galicia, and its degeneration caused by the children of Israel in view of the entire Austrian Monarchy. It has rightly been said that wherever the Jews increase, property is ruined. And that unnamed but widely respected politician who

recommended inviting the Jews back to France clearly warned us against a similar act here, saying: "The Jews are not small and poor, but great and rich. Here [i.e. in France] they help industry, there they kill it."³³

Such sentiments were echoed after 1831, and at times redirected. Mihály Vörösmarty blamed the negative impact of excessive Jewish immigration on the nobles themselves for allowing unfettered Jewish immigration in order to further their own interests:

We, too, are to blame for the destructive influence the Jewish way of life and commerce has on the rest of the population because we leave the borders of our counties unprotected against a flood of Israelites from all over and receive them as innkeepers and shopkeepers even as they ruin the populace. Our greed allowed Jews to flood the villages, and now they are accused of transforming the people into drunkards and destroying every family in their midst.³⁴

While condemning the lack of restrictions, liberal statesmen did not advocate curtailing Jewish immigration, not even from Galicia. Rather they proposed regulating it in such a way as to distinguish between desirable and undesirable Jews. Indicative of this attitude was a speech that Borsod County delegate Aurél Dessewffy delivered to the National Diet:

I do not consider it expedient to allow entirely unrestricted Jewish immigration. In my opinion, we must in this respect try to regulate it through laws that guarantee that immigrants have property, morality, or artisanal skill...and to prevent an inundation of crowds of newcomer beggar Jews trying to improve their land in our land. If these immigrants were to improve their lot in our land, and [the situation of Jews in] neighboring possessions remained the same, this would stimulate further immigration that is not in the best interests of the state, native Jews, and recent immigrants.³⁵

In short, the tendency among nobles since the end of the eighteenth century to encourage unlimited Jewish settlement and population growth as a way to help resettle the region, stimulate trade, and increase the number of taxable subjects gave way to a more cautious approach. During the 1830s, nobles continued to encourage Jews to immigrate, but only certain Jews. They welcomed wealthy Jews, of course, but also

Jews whom they deemed productive and useful. They no longer regarded Jews solely as a source of tax revenue, but also as subjects who could contribute in other ways to the general welfare of the region.

What constituted desirable was a source of disagreement. For most nobles, desirable meant affluent businessmen and artisans. Lajos Batthyány, though, was skeptical even of affluent, foreign businessmen whose ultimate aim was their own gain and not the betterment of Hungary:

Many people seek naturalization in order to acquire property. But there is no guarantee that, after they have utilized the country, their profit will not go to Germany or God knows where. I do not see how it is possible to distinguish between those who want to live in this country...and those who merely wish to acquire property here. There are many propertied people who sneak in on this pretext and move their income abroad....I wish to offer naturalization, but not as a means of earning income... I consider it most unworthy that foreigners are given priority over our fellow non-noble citizens, whose forbears bore the load for our country for centuries.³⁶

In Miskolc, city leaders attempted to transform such views into public policy. As István Dobrossy noted, from the 1820s on one of the central complaints in Borsod County regarding immigration was Jews from Galicia wanting to settle in Miskolc. The city and the county tried many times to take action. An 1827 rescript by city and county officials declared: "No foreigner, whether propertied or property-less, shall be admitted into the bosom of this noble city, especially whoever is not able to earn a livelihood through his own means (i.e. without communal assistance)." The city even tried to include the assistance of the leaders of Miskolc Jewry to help. The latter explained that this endeavor was absurd, since "where there is no power and might, authority is never successful."³⁷

The success of efforts to limit the influx of Galician Jews into Miskolc is unclear, largely because it is difficult to determine precisely how many Galician Jews settled in Miskolc. Historians who claim a large influx cite a sharp rise in the number of Jewish tavern keepers as an indication of a Galician influx. While most employed Jews in 1830 were either businessmen or artisans, by 1838 tavern keepers were the second largest Jewish occupation. There is no evidence, however, as

to how many of these tavern keepers were from Galicia as opposed to Moravia or elsewhere in Hungary.³⁸

The 1848 Jewish Census, the most reliable indication as to the place of origin of Miskolc Jews, clarifies the issue somewhat. According to this census, less than ten percent of Miskolc Jews in 1848 were from Galicia, and more than half were born in Miskolc. On the other hand, more than one-third had migrated to Miskolc from counties along the Hungarian–Galician border, suggesting that they may have been born in Galicia and came to Miskolc after stopping briefly in a neighboring county.³⁹

Whatever the actual size of Jewish immigration from Galicia, officials in Miskolc and Borsod County regarded it as a reason to restrict Jewish immigration generally. This meant distinguishing not only by origin but by occupation. Tavernkeepers, an occupational category closely associated with Galician Jewry, were to be kept out; artisans were to be let in. Despite this growing concern among nobles and other officials, the number of Jewish innkeepers and tavernkeepers in Miskolc rose steadily during the 1830s. By the mid-1830s, the nobles acknowledged that a better organized Jewish community had the best chance to regulate Jewish immigration.

The Jewish guild

The clearest application of this view was the recognition of the Jewish artisans guild by Borsod County. During the cholera epidemic and peasant uprising, Jewish artisans provided valuable assistance, especially during the peasant uprising and in its aftermath. Each time rioting hooligans destroyed sections of the walls that girded the town square, members of the Jewish guild provided supplies for the necessary repairs. The synagogue, which adjoined the town square, still housed the few remaining individuals infected with cholera. Thus, it was essential these walls remain intact in order to insure that individuals remained quarantined. The usefulness of the artisans were seen as the obverse of the parasitic character of tavern keepers.

The Jewish artisans originally organized informally in 1813 into a guild, that is, without state, county, or local recognition.⁴⁰ Other

towns had recognized Jewish guilds; in Ujhely, for example, the Jewish tailors received a letter of privilege in 1823 that was renewed in 1839.⁴¹ In Miskolc, the Jewish guildsmen annually elected an eight-man presidium, consisting of a president and seven trustees, whose job was to ensure that each guildsman paid the annual tax to the guild treasury, and then to deliver a portion of this money to the county treasury. From the start, the guild helped regulate Jewish immigration:

If an artisan comes to Miskolc with the intention of settling here permanently, the guild will under no circumstances accept him as a member unless he has received written permission from the municipality (*Communitas*) to settle in Miskolc. Once he has received this written permission, he may join the guild without the consent of the community.⁴²

In the ebb and flow of corporate politics, noble support was essential for the Jewish artisans to engage in their craft and to organize into a guild. Jewish artisans had to overcome legal barriers, first and foremost, a city ordinance that prohibited Jews from engaging in crafts. An 1821 ruling by the Miskolc chief magistrate, however, negated this ordinance by allowing Jews to produce and sell salt—a trade previously reserved to the Christian salt-makers guild. When the city council approved the request by the Christian honey-makers guild to prohibit Jews from producing or selling honey, the county magistrate declared the request illegal and overturned the city council's decision. Despite noble support for Jewish artisans, when a weekly newspaper, the *Miskolci Értésítő* (*Miskolc Bulletin*), published a list of local guilds in 1842, the Jewish guild was absent.⁴³

Noble support for the Jewish artisans intensified during and after the cholera epidemic, largely due to the behavior of Christian guilds. The latter held fast to the medieval notion of restricting output. They lacked the industriousness that profit-minded nobles valued so highly. When Jewish artisans requested county recognition, the magnates saw an opportunity to create a more efficient and productive guild that would undoubtedly compete the Christian guilds out of existence unless they increased their productivity as well. County recognition of the Jewish guild in 1835 was reaffirmed by royal recognition the following year. Despite this, not all local residents recognized the Jewish guild.

From its inception, the Jewish guild differed from other guilds in Miskolc, not only because it was Jewish, but also because of its attitude toward trade, productivity and profit. As István Dobrossy pointed out, the Miskolc Jewish artisans guild was unusual with respect to other Jewish guilds and to Christian guilds in Miskolc in its greater occupational diversity. In addition to most of the occupations found among Christian guilds—tanners, quilt makers, gold and tin smiths, wax makers, cobblers, soap makers, painters, table makers, bakers, furriers and pipe-makers—the Jewish artisans recognized more recently developed crafts such as pipe-nut making, cap and bonnet sewing, umbrella making, roll baking, and seal engraving—crafts not yet recognized by Christian guilds. Often, Jewish recognition of these crafts anticipated Christian recognition by several years.⁴⁴ The Jewish quiltmakers, for example, were registered in 1828 in the county registry, but absent from the *regnicolaris*, the city registry of guilds.⁴⁵

Jewish guild members dealt coterminously with the Jewish community, Christian guilds, and county officials. Thus they sometimes found themselves caught between conflicting interests and expectations. The recurrent need to negotiate their way around this triangle influenced the Jewish guild members and imparted on their organization a decidedly eclectic character that manifested itself in four ways: the economic outlook of the guild, its relationship with the Jewish community, the attitude of its members toward commerce, and its religious posture.

Honor and profit

Like its Christian counterparts, the Jewish guild imposed a strict code of honor on its members and expected them to maintain unbending loyalty to their fellow guild members. The Jewish guild dealt harshly with members who violated its rules. If a Jewish guildsman broke one of the rules,

he shall be cast out of the guild into lawlessness, and it will cause us no pain to have this individual found guilty by the county for whatever crime he perpetrated. In addition, he will be obligated to remit forty silver coins to the guild.⁴⁶

The differences between Christian guilds and the Jewish guild stemmed from the Christian guilds medieval origins, and the Jewish artisans more recent organization. The hallmark of guilds in the Middle Ages, and one of the reasons most were established in the first place, was a mutual agreement to restrict membership and production to prevent prices from dropping due to an abundance of producers and goods. By the end of the eighteenth century, this approach was decidedly anachronistic in light of the newly conceived notions of the free market and the inherent value of profit. Whatever purposes the medieval economic practices had served, they ran contrary to, and at times disrupted the flow of goods and services in a free market economy.⁴⁷

The economic attitude of the Jewish guild, on the other hand, had the marks of a much different heritage. This guild was organized when the notion of the free market economy and the value of profit already was beginning to capture a wide audience. As the ideas of the Enlightenment permeated into Hungary, a process that accelerated sharply during the Napoleonic Wars, the economic outlook of Christian guilds seemed ludicrous and antiquated. Proponents of the Enlightenment had a general disdain for everything medieval, particularly those practices that prevented an individual from being productive. Besides the influence of the Enlightenment, Jewish artisans had a chronic need to appear productive in the eyes of their aristocratic sponsors, to be worthy of the patronage without which they could not survive.

The attitude of the Jewish guild toward profit periodically brought it into conflict with its Christian counterparts. In 1813, for example, two representatives of the Christian table-makers guild complained to the local magistrate that the Jewish table-makers had made so many tables that the Christians might have to consider exporting their wares, something they preferred not to do.⁴⁸

The exigencies of the cholera epidemic and the peasant uprising brought the disparity between Jewish and Christian guildsmen into even sharper focus. The rigidity with which the Christian guildsmen cleaved to their statutes precluded them from offering any useful assistance, largely because they never mobilized quickly enough to meet a crisis. When Szakmari needed more candles to treat patients at night, for example, he asked the Christian wax makers guild to press

as many candles as possible as quickly as possible. Four days later, Szakmari had not received any candles; he offered to pay double the regular price. When he still had not received any candles after two more days, he turned to the two Jewish wax makers. Within two days, the Jewish wax makers had provided Szakmari with all the candles he needed.⁴⁹ After the epidemic and the peasant riots ended, local magnates re-examined the usefulness of all the guilds, Christian and Jewish. The ineptitude of the Christian guilds prompted the county diet to issue an ultimatum to the Christian guilds in 1836 that threatened to revoke their charters if they did not admit Jewish artisans to their ranks.⁵⁰

This ultimatum had been prompted by three developments. First, several dozen Jewish artisans arrived in Miskolc along with the influx of Jewish migrants after the epidemic. The Jewish guild, unable to absorb so many new members so quickly, asked the Christian guilds to accept some of them. When the Christian guilds refused, the Jews turned to the magnates to intervene.⁵¹ Second, the magnates' pragmatic sensibilities may have led them to conclude that incorporating Jews into Christian guilds would make the Christian guilds more effective. At the same time that the magnates recognized the charter of the Jewish guild, they tried to mold the Christian artisans into workmen of a comparable quality.

Finally, and most important, this ultimatum was the nobility's response to an attempt by the Habsburgs to re-assert its influence in Miskolc. The royal crown recognized the Jewish Artisans Guild as a legitimate guild on par with its Christian counterparts. The nobles, fearful of losing the loyalty and support of the Jewish artisans and offended by this act of royal intrusion, responded by challenging the privileges of Habsburg-sponsored Christian guilds.⁵²

Piety and productivity

Like other guilds, the Jewish guild provided its members with more than simply a profession and employment opportunities. The guild managed all aspects of the lives of its members and their families. The Jewish guild faced the dual task of meeting the religious needs of its

member families while helping them cope with the outside world. The amicable relationship between the guild and county officialdom minimized the pressures of the outside world, except for an occasional altercation with a Christian artisan. The more trying confrontations involved other members of the Jewish community. Such conflicts tended to arise infrequently during the first years of the guild's unofficial existence, largely because the Jewish community remained a diffuse collection of families loosely governed by the Burial Society. The Jewish guild, furthermore, did not raise the usual concerns among Jews who, particularly when imagining their children being trained by a gentile artisan, worried that this might diminish the religious identity of Jews who became artisans.

As the Burial Society expanded its range of activities during the 1820s, integrating the growing number of Jewish families in the community into a more cohesive entity and consolidating its hold over the entire Jewish community, tensions arose between it and the Jewish artisans. The major conflict centered around the issue of benefits. When the Burial Society began providing free health care to all of its members, including recent arrivals, the guild asked for the same service. A representative of the Burial Society then informed the guildsmen that the Burial Society would gladly provide them with health care, but for a fee:

With regard to the Handworkers association, several of whom we provided assistance to, the tribunal issued the following: . . . as an act of kindness, the aforementioned sick individuals will be given medical care and medicine free of charge by our physician and can reside in the Jewish hospice (*Hekdesh*) for a period of fourteen days...for all subsequent physician's care and medicine, the sick individual will bring a receipt to the guild, who will remit payment in full...in addition the guild will pay six forints per day for room and board...If, heaven forbid, the patient dies during the first fourteen days, then the guild is obligated to pay burial expenses.⁵³

Such conflicts notwithstanding, there were noteworthy similarities between the guild and the Burial Society, particularly between the guild and the Malatsches. Both the Burial Society and the guild combined religious piety with industriousness. Like the Burial Society, the guild required its members to attend synagogue regularly:

All guild members will attend the synagogue at least once on Saturday and on all Jewish holidays. Anyone who violates this rule or, in general, acts disrespectfully toward religion in any way will, after an investigation, be liable for a punishment.⁵⁴

Both organizations demanded complete commitment and exemplary moral behavior from their members. Both organizations had a deep respect for law and hierarchy. The statutes of the guild advised its members to be law-abiding citizens and observant Jews:

If someone perpetrates a crime against the community or against the municipality, such as stealing something or abducting someone, the perpetrator will not only be punished according to the laws of Moses, but will also merit punishment as a criminal.⁵⁵

Perhaps most important, both organizations were revered by the rest of the Jewish community for the invaluable services they provided. The members of the two organizations formed a distinct group within the Jewish community. Just as families such as the Brodys and the Zuckermendls formed an elite of piety and wealth, the leaders of the Burial Society and the guild formed an distinct coterie of piety and industriousness.

The mutual dependence between the two groups reached its peak during the cholera epidemic. The county enlisted both organizations to help combat the epidemic and, later, to repair the damages of the peasant riot. When one of the Jewish masons who was repairing the wall around the cemetery fell ill, he was taken immediately to the Jewish hospice for medical treatment by the Burial Society's physician. His medical benefits had evidently expired and he was told that, unless he obtained a voucher from the guild indicating that the guild would cover his medical costs, he would be unable to receive treatment. At that point, one of the leaders of the Hevra Malatsches intervened on behalf of the guildsman, who promptly received treatment.⁵⁶

From Artisans Guild to Handworkers Association

The contributions of the Jewish guild during the cholera epidemic cemented its status. In February 1838, a delegation representing the county and the royal crown announced that “the Solicitor of the Royal Treasury and the Office of the Central Deputy Sheriff acknowledge the Assembly of Israelites engaged in craftsmanship.”⁵⁷ Soon after, the guild members ceased referring to their organization as a guild (*Zunft* in Yiddish-Deutsch, *Czéh* in Hungarian), but rather as the Jewish Artisans Association (*Handwerkersverein/ Kéziparegyesülés*). This change represented more than a semantic preference: it captured their increasingly progressive character. From their inception, the guild members had differed from Christian guilds in their attitude toward trade and profit. But, whereas this attitude was initially a practical response to the need to satisfy the magnates, by the 1830s the Jewish artisans perceived themselves more as a trade association. Their commercial outlook was evident in the years after the name change, as their treasury increased significantly each year. While Christian guilds languished during the 1830s and the 1840s, the artisans’ association flourished.⁵⁸ The success of the Jewish Artisans Association showed reform-minded nobles that added Jewish communal organization could actually enhance the utility of the Jews. These noblemen had known this implicitly since the cholera epidemic; they would spend the next decade searching for additional ways to benefit from Jewish communal organization.

The emergence of the Jewish artisans guild marked the final episode in a trilogy of county politics that dated back over half a century. Since the end of the eighteenth century, leading nobles had struggled to wrest control of Miskolc out of the hands of the burghers, middle nobility and guildsmen, who all claimed to be exempt from the leading nobles’ authority, imagined themselves to be sovereign over the town of Miskolc, and had hidden behind the royal charter to evade county authority.⁵⁹ During each stage of the campaign, the magnates pitted the Jewish community against their burgher, middle-nobleman, or guildsman neighbors as a way of diminishing their dependence on royally protected citizens. During the 1810s and 1820s, leading nobles undermined the prestige of lesser noblemen and burghers engaged in

commerce by favoring their Jewish commercial rivals. By the end of the 1830s, Jewish artisans challenged the hegemony of Christian Guilds.

Noble support for the Jewish guild differed in one important regard. Whereas support for Jewish settlement and trade in Miskolc encouraged unrestricted Jewish immigration, support for the guild encouraged it more selectively. The aim of nobles with respect to Jews changed from importing taxable subjects into establishing a more orderly county and city government.

In a broader sense, official recognition of a Jewish guild by a state official was a moment of profound significance. Although there had been Jewish artisans guilds before, such as those in pre-partition Poland and in seventeenth century Bohemia and Moravia, these guilds had not been chartered by the state, but only by the leaders of the Council of Four Lands in Poland or the Council of Moravia in the Czech lands. Thus, although these guilds played no less an important role than the Jewish guild did in Miskolc, the act of a Jewish legislative body recognizing a Jewish guild was simply not as momentous as a Christian ruler recognizing a Jewish guild.⁶⁰

The significance of this event extended beyond the mere act of official recognition. Virtually every ideologue who designed a plan to transform the Jews included a scheme to convert unproductive Jewish peddlers and money-lenders into productive farmers and artisans. Farming had never been an option for Jews in Hungary, but Joseph II had ordered Christian guilds to admit Jews, albeit to no avail. By 1836 a Christian ruler recognized the rights of the Jews to engage in crafts.

For Borsod County nobles, the creation of a Jewish guild was a first step toward a new policy regarding Jewish immigration: encouraging productive Jews to settle in Miskolc. The next step, addressing the growing number of illegally residing Jews, would require further expansion of Jewish communal organization. This the nobles would do by expanding the mandate of leading Jewish families beyond the limited scope of the Burial Society to the more comprehensive mandate of the *Kehilla*.

NOTES

- 1 Dobrossy, *Miskolc története* III/2, p. 710.
- 2 The new law also required Jews to use permanent names and keep all communal records either in Hungarian or German. For a brief summary of the events leading up the passage of this law, see Nathaniel Katzburg, *Pinkas ha-Kehillot: Hungary's Jews* (Jerusalem, 1976) p. 22; for a summary in English, see Raphael Patai, *The Jews of Hungary: History, Culture, Psychology* (Detroit, 1996) pp. 232–233.
- 3 István Dobrossy, *Miskolc írásban és képekben* [Miskolc in Texts and Images] (Miskolc, 1996) vol. 1 p. 238.
- 4 On the cholera epidemic of 1831, see Asa Briggs, "Cholera and Society" in *Nineteenth Century European Politics*, ed. Eugene C. Black (Garden City, 1964):37–61; Louis Chevalier, *Le Cholera: La Première Epidémie du XIXe Siècle* (Paris, 1958); Richard J. Evans, *Death in Hamburg: Society and Politics in the Cholera Years, 1839–1910* (Oxford, 1987); Evans, "Epidemics and Revolutions: Cholera in Nineteenth-Century Europe" *Past and Present* 120 (1985): 123–146; Charles Rosenberg, *The Cholera Years: The United States in 1832, 1849, and 1866* (Chicago and London, 1987); Mádai Lajos, "Kolerajárványok és az általános halandóság trendjei Európában a XIX. században" [Cholera and the General Mortality Trends in Nineteenth Century Europe] *Közlemények* [Proceedings] 26:2–3 (1982): 330–351.
- 5 Evans, *Death in Hamburg*, pp. 23–34.
- 6 Howard Markel, *Quarantine!: East European Immigrants and the New York City Epidemics of 1892* (Baltimore and London: 1997) pp. 15–20.
- 7 Philippe Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death* (New York, 1981) pp. 409–472.
- 8 Evans, *Death in Hamburg*, p. 229.
- 9 A similar situation exists today. In Western countries people infected with cholera are immediately treated and isolated. Only in Third World countries does cholera still claim large numbers of lives. I am indebted to Dr. Aaron Lupovitch, Dr. Steven Lupovitch, and Dr. Beth Lupovitch Nadis for familiarizing me with the nature of the cholera infection and its treatment.
- 10 Henrik Marczali, *Hungary in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1910) p. 222 n. 1.
- 11 Rosenberg, *The Cholera Years*, p. 13.
- 12 István Dobrossy, "A kolera pusztításai 1831-ben és 1849-ben" [The Ravages of Cholera in 1831 and 1849] in *Miskolc írásban és képekben* I, p. 238.
- 13 *Kolerára vonatkozó anyagok* [Documents pertaining to Cholera] (Hereinafter, KVA) in BAZML. This collection of documents includes the reports of sixteen commissioners, the records of local physicians and county officials, which give names, the date infected, the date recovered or died, and a brief description of symptoms; second, reports and requests that individual towns and villages submitted to the deputy high sheriff of Borsod county, and usually his response; and, third, the reports of Joseph Szakmari, first chief physician of the county. I extend my gratitude to the archivists for photocopying this collection.

- 14 Alfred Moess and M. Román Éva, "Megyei és városi physikusok Magyarországon a XIX. század fordulóján" [County and City Physicians in Hungary at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century] *Levéltári közlemények* 50:2 (1979) pp. 291–294.
- 15 Dobrossy, *Miskolc írásban és képeken*, p. 233.
- 16 Ibid, pp. 234–235.
- 17 KVA IV/94/18 #29.
- 18 Statistics regarding the epidemic in Szentpéter are in KVA IV/96/18 #27–31. The physician's report is in KVA IV/96/45 #10–11.
- 19 On the epidemic in Hejőcsaba see KVA IV/94/23 #19 and #25–26. The population of Hejőcsaba is listed in Elek Fényes, *Magyarországnak statistikája*, p. 101.
- 20 Dobrossy, *Miskolc írásban és képeken*, p. 234.
- 21 *Protokol be-Hadash* p. 34:a #10. (February 22, 1822)
- 22 Interestingly, although brandy is no longer used to treat cholera victims, Szakmari may have anticipated what physicians now refer to as oral re-hydration solution: a mixture that combines sugar and salt in the correct proportions. Currently, oral hydration solution is the most common way to treat cholera in the Third World and the most effective. Pálinka, which has a high content of sugar and salt, may not contain these two ingredients in the precise proportions, but physicians like Szakmari may have nonetheless yielded tangible results when they administered pálinka to cholera victims. I thank Doctor Beth Lupovitch Nadis for bringing this to my attention.
- 23 The complaint is in KVA V/45/43 #12.
- 24 KVA V/23/12 #6.
- 25 *Protokol be-Hadash*, p. 59:b #39 (July 9 1831).
- 26 KVA IV/94/23 / #33.
- 27 I am grateful to Dr. István Gazdag, director of the Hajdú-Bihar County Archive in Debrecen for bringing this document to my attention.
- 28 Szakmari's background and outlook are not unlike that of Kossuth, who was also in many ways more professional than noble. This aspect of Kossuth is discussed in Deák, *The Lawful Revolution*, pp. 11–13.
- 29 George Barany, *Stephen Széchenyi and the Hungarian National Awakening*, p. 227.
- 30 Loránt Tilkovszky, *Az 1831 évi parasztfelkelés*, [The Peasant Uprising of 1831] (Hereinafter Tilkovszky, *Parasztfelkelés*) (Budapest, 1955) pp. 32–42 regarding the impact of the Polish insurrection, and pp. 42–61 regarding the impact of the epidemic.
- 31 János Balásházy, *Az 1831-dik esztendői felső magyarországi zendüléseknek történeti leírása*, [A Historical Description of the Riots in Upper Hungary from the Year 1831] (Pest: 1832), quoted from Tilkovszky, *Parasztfelkelés*, p. 56.
- 32 Barany, *Széchenyi*, p. 286.
- 33 Ferenc Kölcsey, "On the Condition of the Taxpaying Population of Szatmár County" in Ferenc Kulin, ed., *Kölcsey Ferenc*, (Budapest, 1998) p. 115.
- 34 Mihály Vörösmarty, "A Zsidóság" *Összes művei* (Budapest, 1878) p. 80.

- 35 Aurél Dessewffy, "On the Jews" in *Dessewffy Aurél összes művei* (Budapest, 1876) p. 261.
- 36 Batthyány, "Az idegenek honosításáról" [On the Naturalization of Foreigners] in Gábor Erdődy ed., *Batthyány Lajos* (Budapest, 1998) pp. 96–97.
- 37 Dobrossy, *Miskolc története*, III/1 p. 625.
- 38 *Ibid.*, pp. 631–632. In 1838, out of 328 Jewish heads of households, 91 were engaged in some form of commerce, 85 were tavern keepers, and 63 were artisans.
- 39 *Conscriptio Judaeorum* (Miskolc, 1848).
- 40 On the Jewish artisans guild, I am relying primarily on János Szendrei, *Miskolc város története [A History of the City of Miskolc]*, Budapest, 1909), Volume V, pp. 708–721. In addition, the statutes of the guild were entered into the protocols of the Jewish community. See *Protocolle* pp. 303:b–304:b #127.
- 41 Géza Eperjessy, *Mezővárosi és falusi céhek az Alföldön és a Dunántúlon (1648–1848)* [Market-Town and Village Guilds on the Great Plain and in Transdanubia] (Budapest, 1967) p. 130 n. 80.
- 42 *Protocolle*, p. 304:a statute #4.
- 43 *Miskolci Értesítő* (June 6, 1842) p. 2. Dobrossy, *Miskolc története* III/2, p. 632 n. 279.
- 44 Dobrossy, *Miskolc története*, III p. 631; Szendrei, *Miskolc*, p. 711; On the distribution of guilds in Miskolc, see Lajos Szádeczky, *Iparfejlődés és a céhek története Magyarországon* [Industrial Development and the History of Guilds in Hungary], Volume 2, (Budapest, 1913) pp. 197–199; Géza Eperjessy, *Mezővárosi és falusi céhek az Alföldön és a Dunántúlon, 1686–1848 [Town and Village Guilds in the Great Plain and Transdanubia]*, (Budapest: 1967) pp. 224–225.
- 45 Dobrossy, *Miskolc története*, III/2 p. 632 n. 279; Eperjessy, *Mezővárosi és falusi céhek*, p. 135.
- 46 *Protocolle*, p. 304:a.
- 47 Eperjessy, *Céhek*, p. 92.
- 48 Szendrei, *Miskolc*, p. 713.
- 49 Szakmari did not mention a shortage of candles in his next report to the deputy high sheriff. See KVA V/87/12/ #34.
- 50 Eperjessy, *Céhek*, p. 119.
- 51 Sós, *Zsidók*, p. 129; Szendrei, *Miskolc*, p. 715.
- 52 The imperial charter is not extant in its original, but a facsimile of the first page can be found in Sós, *Zsidók*, between pages 125 and 126. The first seven or eight lines are discernable and mention the good work of the Jewish guild.
- 53 *Protokol be-Hadash* p. 92:b-93:a #43, (November 3 1836).
- 54 *Protocolle*, p. 304:a.
- 55 *Ibid.*, p. 304:b.
- 56 *Protokol be-Hadash* p. 92:b #42.

57 "...mesterséget gyakorló Izraéliták gyülekezéseinek a tettes királyi kamarai ügyvéd és a központi szolgabírói hivatal megerősítettése tudomásul vétett." (sic) Quoted in Szendrei, *Miskolc*, p. 711; and in Sós, *Zsidók*, p. 128.

58 The name change appeared as early as 1831 during the cholera epidemic when the communal record refers to this organization both as *Zunft* and *Handwerkersverein*.

59 Szendrei, *Miskolc*, vol. IV, p. 619.

60 On Jewish guilds in eighteenth century Poland, see Moses Kremer, "Jewish Artisans and Guilds in Former Poland, 16th through 18th Century," *Yivo Annual of Jewish Social Science* 11 (1956–57) pp. 211–242; Hundert, *Opatów*, pp. 65–66, and 47–48.

MISKOLCI ORTH. IZR. ANYAHITKÖZSÉG

Kazinczy-utcai főtemplom Szám: _____

Nagyságos ב"ה 193_____

_____ úrnak

Köszönettel igazoljuk, hogy 193_____ hó
 _____ n. _____ felajánlott templomadománya fejében felvettünk
 _____ pengőt és pedig:

Å hitk. intézmények fentart. céljaira (לצדקה)		
Szegények segélyezésére (לעניים)		
Talmudtórának (לתלמוד תורה)		
Polg. iskolának		
Nyugdíjalapra		
Menházalapra		
Egyetemi hallgatóknak		
Összesen pengő		

Miskolc, 193_____ hó _____ n.

templomgondnok. jegyző.

Stamberger Márkua Miskolc 5465

The Kehilla and the Business of Religion

For many years it has been known that more and more residents of our community feign living here legally... We have elected a committee to reduce this number, as other communities have done... Alas, we have been without a rabbi for three years and, as a result, *Dat Yisrael* has diminished... It is of the utmost importance to select and hire a rabbi as soon as possible. In addition, the Kehilla should attempt to acquire Brantwine Square. A new place of worship should be built there under the auspices of the Kehilla, with the aim of relieving the onerous situation that detracts from communal worship...¹

Thus Wolf Brody, in his capacity as president of the *Kehilla* (recognized Jewish community) enumerated the central challenge facing the Miskolc Jewish community during the 1830s: regulating Jewish immigration, particularly from Galicia, in accordance with the county nobility's expectations; while meeting the needs of a rapidly growing constituency that nearly tripled during the 1830s. In one sense, meeting these challenges promised conflicting results. By hiring a rabbi, building a new synagogue, and improving communal schools Miskolc would become a more attractive destination for Jewish migrants, thereby attracting the same would-be settlers that county officials wanted to discourage from settling.

Individually, neither the Borsod County magnates nor the leaders of the Jewish community had the capability of restricting the number of "undesirable" immigrants. The magnates lacked the bureaucratic infrastructure to monitor the arrival of Jewish immigrants. Jewish communal leaders, on the other hand, were generally aware of newly

arriving Jewish immigrants and wanted to limit the number of Jews who resided in Miskolc without paying some form of membership dues, but lacked the authority to prevent illegal residents from settling or to force them to leave. The resulting union of magnate and Jewish communal interests was the Miskolc Kehilla.

Beginning in the late 1820s, Wolf Brody and the elite families who comprised the leadership of the Kehilla implemented a varied, ad hoc series of measures that appear, in retrospect, self-contradicting. As a point of departure, they continued and expanded the administrative strategy they had used as leaders of the Burial Society; that is, they enhanced their authority in communal matters by providing additional goods and services as benefits to member families—kosher meat and the proper supervision of ritual slaughter, a well-run synagogue with adequate seating and a satisfactory prayer service, a ritual bath, the religious and moral guidance of a rabbi, and communal schools.

It was no longer enough, however, for the Kehilla simply to expand the benefits of membership. They moved beyond this administrative strategy in two ways. First, they distinguished clearly between Miskolc Jews who paid annual dues to some Jewish communal organization—be it the Burial Society, or, in this case, the Jewish Artisans Guild and the Kehilla—and those who merely resided in Miskolc without paying dues. Second, attached fees to the goods and services they provided or taxed these goods and services outright. Together these measures had conflicting aims. A wider range of benefits attracted immigrants and encouraged them to join the Jewish community. Higher fees and taxes on communal services discouraged indigent and less productive would-be settlers.

At the same time, communal leaders used some of the money collected in fees and taxes to aid and protect indigent Jews who resided in Miskolc, even though they had discouraged these Jews from settling there. They provided aid by subsidizing goods and services; and protection by bribing local officials to overlook the presence of illegal Jewish residents who could not afford to pay membership dues.

By the end of the 1830s, the Kehilla had effectively regulated and retarded the influx of Jewish immigrants from Galicia. According to the Jewish Census of 1848, this influx had diminished substantially by 1839, even as the Jewish community nearly tripled. By 1848, less than

10% of the Jews in Miskolc came from Poland, and fewer than 20% had come from a Hungarian county along the border of Galicia.

By effectively regulating Jewish immigration, the Jews of Miskolc added an administrative dimension to the commercial alliance between Jews and magnates in Borsod County. By 1839, the Miskolc Kahal had expanded its leverage from Miskolc to all of Borsod County, and had, for all intents and purposes, subsumed the County Assembly. As these families firmly established their control over Borsod County Jewry, the Miskolc Kehilla became the centerpiece of the county-Kehilla.

The expansion of the Miskolc Kehilla during the 1830s into the Borsod County Kehilla dominated by Miskolc Jews mirrored—and, to some extent, reinforced—the emergence of the county diet as the fundamental governing body in Borsod County, with its seat in Miskolc. The Borsod County Diet, situated in Miskolc and dominated by a handful of magnate families, was the preeminent political institution of Borsod County. Similarly, the same five or six Jewish families from Miskolc that had dominated the Burial Society comprised the bulk of the officer corps of the county-wide Kehilla, the preeminent Jewish institution.

The expanding domain of the Miskolc Kehilla was the latest instance of Jews becoming involved in a more complex relationship with the nobility. During the 1830s, the county diet replaced individual magnates and the Miskolc magistrate as the principle arbiter of Jewish rights and obligations. In the case of the slaughter and distribution of kosher meat, in particular, this growing complexity was the direct consequence of the Kehilla expanding a Jewish communal institution. The Kehilla transformed the slaughter and distribution of kosher meat into a profitable commercial venture, and then invited prominent local nobles to invest and then share in the profits. This gave the magistrates a larger vested interest in the development of the Jewish community, thereby transforming commercial relations between nobles and Jews from an individual to a communal and institutional level.

This growing vested interest, coupled with the emergence of the formalized leadership of the Kehilla in place of the ad hoc leadership of the Burial Society, facilitated a more permanent Jewish commercial presence in Miskolc, a reflection of the maturing of the town of Mi-

skolc itself. During the 1830s and 1840s, dozens of permanent stores opened in Miskolc, mostly along Széchenyi Street (later renamed Kazinczy Street). These stores were located in the heart of the Jewish part of the city; most were owned by Jews.² Among the stores were Mihály Heilprin's bookstore, Móric Weisz's liquor store, Ignac Fischer's shoestore, and Samuel Fischmann's matchstick shop.³ Initially, these stores complimented the Jewish-owned stalls at twice-weekly market fairs as providers of goods; gradually they replaced the stalls.

From Burial Society to Kehilla

The precise origins and beginnings of the Miskolc Kehilla are not entirely clear, obfuscating the multifarious meaning of the term Kehilla itself. In the parlance of the Middle Ages, Kehilla referred to a corporate, self-governing Jewish community, a "sort of little state, inter-territorial and nonpolitical, but nonetheless quasi-totalitarian." The medieval Kehilla was endowed by the reigning authority with a broad range of powers: to assess and collect taxes, to govern all facets of communal life autonomously under Jewish law, and to maintain a separate network of judicial courts.⁴

From the eighteenth century on, this form of communal organization was increasingly eroded as part of the broader assault on corporate privileges. Initially, state policies in the Habsburg Monarchy and German Central Europe eliminated Jewish corporate autonomy along with other corporate privileges as a way of centralizing state administration. By the mid-nineteenth century, the assumption that Jews would cede their corporate status *quid pro quo* in exchange for civic equality had become a unifying thread in the tapestry of debates over Jewish emancipation. Proponents of emancipation presumed that the dissolution of corporate Jewish autonomy would be the first step toward the elimination of Jewish particularity and communal solidarity.

The demise of the corporate Jewish community during the nineteenth century ostensibly affirmed this assumption. The corporate communities of the middle ages were superseded, sometimes abruptly and often gradually, by a more limited communal administration that supervised primarily ritual, philanthropic, and educational matters. By

the end of the nineteenth century, *Kehilla* came to refer increasingly to the present-day religious congregation more than to a corporate, self-governing community.⁵

Jewish communities quickly adapted to the new political reality, and continued to operate beyond the narrow sphere of religious ritual, contrary to the rhetoric of the time. The survival of Jewish communal activity and solidarity was a ubiquitous feature of nineteenth century European Jewry in absolutist and liberal regimes. As Robert Liberles pointed out:

despite occasional political rhetoric, the governments of Western Europe did not seek the demise of the organized Jewish community...despite the loss of juridical autonomy, emancipation did not present a fundamental challenge to Jewish communal structure. In fact, in many ways, communal ties were actually strengthened as a result of emancipation.⁶

Even in France, the flagship in the attack on corporate Jewish autonomy, a Jewish communal infrastructure remained intact. As Jay Berkovitz noted:

On the social and religious level communal association remained a fact of life that served the essential needs of the Jews. Prayer, ritual slaughtering, and burial are only some of the religious observances that require or presuppose a community... In addition, neither lay nor rabbinic leaders were anxious to relinquish their authority... In matters of religion [their authority] would be upheld as long as the community continued to respect the centrality of Jewish tradition.⁷

In the Habsburg Monarchy, the major blow to corporate autonomy was delivered by Joseph II, who abolished it during the 1780s. Decades later, at the middle of the nineteenth century, Jewish communal leaders in the Habsburg Monarchy had retained or recovered a measure of juridical authority and taxation. In Prague, as Ruth Ke-stenberg-Glatstein pointed out, “the Jewish tribunals remained in existence for religious matters and the upper and lower judges retained their title and function.”⁸

In Hungary, the Josephinian reforms were in effect for less than a decade, but the post-Josephinian settlement precluded, in most cases, the existence of a corporate Jewish community. Law 29 enacted by

the Hungarian National Assembly in 1791, entitled Jewish communities only to those institutions that they had established by 1790. The handful of Jewish communities that had formed a Kehilla prior to 1790 reverted back to the letter of privileges they had received from their magnate sponsor.⁹ Miskolc Jewry, like the vast majority of Hungarian Jewish communities, was minuscule in 1790, and thus barred by Law 29 from forming a corporate community.

The legal prohibition barring Jewish communal organization, however, was less fact than fiction in nineteenth century Hungary, and Miskolc is a case in point. The backward character of state and county government created an administrative vacuum that allowed Jewish communities to take on an increasing range of functions. For a century or more after the elimination of corporate autonomy the Hungarian state and county governments lacked the bureaucratic capability to manage even the most rudimentary Jewish communal matters, thus these responsibilities fell by default to the Jewish community that acted, to borrow from Moshe Rosman's description of a similar situation in Poland, as "a low level of the judiciary which handled a defined class of cases: minor civil matters between Jews."¹⁰

The communal organization of Miskolc Jewry was a hybrid of the old and new forms of communal organization. Miskolc Jews assessed and paid the Toleration Tax to the royal treasury via the sheriff of Borsod County, together with the rest of Borsod County Jewry in a single annual payment assessed and collected by an elected council—a hallmark of a corporate community. They paid other taxes, though, individually to the county treasury and to individual magnates. Miskolc Jews were not governed exclusively according to Jewish law, as corporate communities had been in the past, but the Miskolc *Kehilla's* jurisdiction extended beyond the limited scope of religion, education, and philanthropy.

The Miskolc Kehilla emerged during the 1820s as an amalgamation of the Burial Society, individual patents of prominent Jews such as Wolf Brody, and a second organization, a county-wide Jewish Assembly (the *Honorable Borsod County Israelite Gemeinde löbliche Borchoder* [sic] *Comitat israelitischen Gemeinde*, referred to Hebrew as *bnai he-Medina*) that was presided over by a County Council. The County Assembly was comprised of Jews who paid the Toleration Tax, or at

least were designated as tax-payers by the County Council. It was organized by the county sheriff “in response to Borsod County Jews’ failure to pay the [Toleration] Tax.” The reference to a Kahal referred to its leadership council. The creation of this organization signaled the “restoration of the executive [*Vorsteher*] and its authority by his majesty, the king.”¹¹ It was presided over by a five-man council of leading Jews from Borsod County, elected annually by its membership. The protocol of the county assembly, although it begins only in 1825, implied that this organization had been in operation at least since 1821:

This is the Protocol of the Jews of Borsod County established at the time of the assembly of county Jewish leaders (*bnai ha-medina*) in 1825 regarding the Toleration Tax...under the direction of five officers (*alufim-keznim*) from Borsod County, who are listed here by name: Wolf Brody, first deputy of the County (*Medina*), Jonah Czukermandl, second deputy and head assessor, Isaac Glatzer of Szendrő, third deputy, Moses Sugar of Keresztur, fourth deputy, and Moses Lieb Katz of Szentpéter, fifth deputy. This five-man executive, which has served for the last three years, was newly appointed today by this assembly for the next three years, with the same powers and authority as before...¹²

The Miskolc-dominated County Council overlapped with the leadership of the Miskolc Burial Society. The council was led by Wolf Brody, who also presided over the Burial Society. Jonah Czukermandl was first deputy of the Burial Society and the County Council’s chief tax assessor. Periodically during the 1820s, the County Assembly had dealings with the Miskolc Burial Society. In January 1820, the annual election of the Burial Society’s officers had to be delayed because the following day was “the meeting of the county officers (*bnai ha-medina*) regarding the Toleration Tax is commencing.”¹³

The County Assembly was the first of three Jewish sub-communities recognized by counties officials during the 1820s and 1830s, the Miskolc Kehilla and the Borsod County Kehilla being the other two. Initially empowered solely to assess and collect the Toleration Tax, by the end of the 1820s the County Council shared with the Miskolc Burial Society the expenses and the services of a rabbi. Like the Burial Society, the Council distributed charity to indigent Jews, primarily to Jews in communities without a local source of charity, who only rarely received as-

sistance from the Miskolc Burial Society. In some cases Miskolc Jews applied for charity from the County Council, in addition to or in lieu of receiving charity from the Miskolc Burial Society.¹⁴

The immediate impetus to the amalgamation of the County Assembly and the Burial Society were the latter's expanding costs. To cover these costs, in 1826 the Burial Society began selling its vineyards annually to a member of the County Assembly.¹⁵ This stop gap measure temporarily replenished the treasury of the Burial Society.

A more serious financial crisis unfolded in 1828, when the Burial Society began the construction of a *Binyan Hekdesh*, or Jewish hospice.¹⁶ This project, the high point in the Burial Society's communal leadership, was the crowning success of Brody's tenure as Burial Society president. Brody noted two reasons for undertaking this project, the challenge of serving an expanding constituency, and prestige with respect to Jews in Miskolc and to other Jewish communities:

Since we are no longer able to tend to the sick adequately, we have decided to build a Hekdesh... Other communities are equipped with such facilities, why shouldn't we have one as well?... Each of us must be diligent, industrious, and tireless in this endeavor so that the community realizes that the Hevra Kadisha is functioning in an orderly fashion."

From the outset, it became clear that the Burial Society lacked the financial resources to complete this project without outside assistance. The cost of the Hekdesh far outpaced all of the Burial Society's other expenses and thus revealed the limit of the Burial Society's financial capacity. Within a month after the project began, it became clear that the Burial Society would not be able to meet the construction costs. Brody had committed the Burial Society to pay in full by the end of 1830, else the owner of the property had the right to raise the price or back out entirely. Attempts to solicit donations from communities in Borsod Counties, from elsewhere in Hungary, and from abroad failed to raise enough capital.¹⁷

In response, Brody took what, in retrospect, turned out to be the first step in the emergence of the Miskolc Kehilla. He transferred to the Burial Society his private license to slaughter kosher meat. As president of the Burial Society, he then imposed a tax on the sale of the kosher meat slaughtered on his *kosherbank*.¹⁸

Brody was not the only one who combined his personal assets with communal ventures. Jacob Resofski, an officer of the Burial Society and the proprietor of the local bathhouse and *mikveh*, or ritual bath, shared ownership of the *mikveh* with the Burial Society. Under the auspices of the Burial Society, he imposed a schedule of fees for using the ritual bath (see Table IV). 40% of the revenue from these fees went to the Burial Society. Resofski offered a range of options that coupled immersion in the ritual bath with use of the other bathhouse facilities as well. For the Resofski family, the bathhouse and ritual bath became a growing source of income, helping Jacob Resofski's son Gyula establish the Resofki Steamworks during the 1840s—which would eventually become one of the major industries in Miskolc.¹⁹ The fees assessed on using the ritual bath for the Miskolc Jewry, like the tax on kosher meat, furthered the efforts of communal leaders to transform communal institutions into sources of revenue. Within three years, moreover, the tax on kosher meat and the fees for using the mikveh became cornerstones of the Kehilla's administration.

Table IV: Resofski's Mikveh: Options and Prices (in Gulden)

One Man, Cold Water in Mikveh, without regular bath	12
One Man, Warm Water in Mikveh, without regular bath	12
One Women, warm water in Mikveh, without regular bath	18
One person in regular bath	18
Two Women in regular bath	12 each
Bride	Double rate

Source: *Pinkas ha-Kehilla* (1833) p. 95.

Neither the tax on kosher meat nor the fees for the mikveh, however, raised sufficient funds to pay for the Hekdesh. Brody, in his capacity as Burial Society President, reached an agreement with the president of the County Council (essentially negotiating with himself). As head of the Burial Society he conceded that the hospice would belong to the entire Jewish community; in exchange, the meat tax would be extended to all Jews in Borsod County.²⁰ At this point, Brody not only made reference to the Kehilla itself, but as an organization distinct from the Burial Society:

I am elated regarding the generosity with which the *Kehilla* presented one-third of the revenue from the meat tax to the *Hevra Kadisha* for the building of the *Hekdesh*, and I assure you that more than 100 gulden of this money has already been collected... The members of the *Hevra Kadisha* must use this money for the building of the *Hekdesh*.²¹

That the Burial Society and Kehilla were, by this point, separate organizations is indicated by a subsequent agreement in which the Burial Society allowed the Kehilla to send delegates to Burial Society meetings and for ritual slaughterers employed by the Kehilla to use the hospice:

Regarding the aforementioned aid for the building of the Hekdesh...the Kehilla will inspect the house from the time builders begin...and, since this Hekdesh will represent us forever as in other communities...seven men from our Kehilla *who are not members of the Burial Society*...are authorized to appear with Wolf Brody at meetings of the Burial Society...the Kehilla will determine whether rulings are entirely acceptable...Behind the community building in the garden, we have brought in two *Fleischbanken* for the members of the Kehilla.²²

In addition, regarding use of the large meeting hall, the two organizations acknowledged that:

it is understood that the great room will be reserved for a meeting of the entire *Kehilla* or for a *Hevra Kadisha* banquet and to share the large hall. The *Hevra Kadisha* has agreed that the members of the *Kehilla* will at all times have a say as to who gets the big room. In order that these arrangements will avoid any tension between the between the *Kehilla* and the *Hevra Kadisha*, the head of the *Kehilla* will have the sexton of the *Kehilla* notify the head of the *Hevra Kadisha* or the head of the *Hevra Kadisha* or the trustees will have the sexton of the *Hevra Kadisa* give notice to the head of the *Kehilla* when the room is in use...²³

Finally, Brody solicited contributions from the County Council to be used as an endowment to support the hospice.

Table V: Donations to the Hekdesh, 1829–1830 (in Gulden)

Jonah Zukerman	350
Lieb Herz	151
Wolf Brody	100
Anshel Stern	100
Tevel Moskowitz	26
Havra Malatsches	5
Others	366
Total	1098

Source: *Protokol He-Hadash*. (Miskolc, 1830).

The Hekdesh project, in effect, signaled the existence of the Kehilla by 1830. By 1833, the Kehilla was recognized by the Landed Estate of the City of Miskolc.²⁴ Though, by this point, the Burial Society and the Kehilla were separate organizations, there was a clear continuity between them. The same families dominated the officer corps of both organizations. Joining the Kehilla, moreover, included the same requirements as joining the Burial Society as a non-service member. Both entailed paying an admission fee in exchange for the benefits of membership. Finally, the tribunals of the Kehilla retained two essential characteristics of the tribunals of the Burial Society. First, the Kehilla's tribunals were not authorized by local authorities, and thus derived their authority from control over benefits. Second, the tribunals of the Kehilla claimed jurisdiction over the moral behavior of its constituency.

The two cardinal differences between the two organizations stemmed from the range of benefits and manner in which each organization divided its membership. From the outset, the Kehilla offered its members all the benefits that the Burial Society offered, and additional benefits that the Burial Society could not offer: the right to purchase kosher meat, acquire a pew in the synagogue, and to use communal schools. As these benefits expanded during the 1830s, membership in the Kehilla took on greater value, giving the leadership of the Kehilla more leverage over its members, beginning with the fundamental right of residence, the *Heṣḳat ba-Kehilla*.

The fundamental difference between obtaining this permit from the Burial Society and from the Kehilla was that, prior to 1848, the *Heṣḳat ba-Kehilla* that was obtained from the Kehilla was the only

means through which Jews could establish legal residency in Miskolc. With a monopoly over granting this permit the leaders of the Kehilla initially raised the cost of obtaining one to 150 Guldens, before eventually fixing it at 100 Guldens. One of the first to be charged the higher fee was Moses Ornstein, who settled in Miskolc in July 1833:

Moses Ornstein's request for *Hezkat ha-Kehilla* has been granted, and he will thus donate 150 Gulden to the treasury of the Kehilla, one-third of which will be transferred to the treasury of the Burial Society, in accordance with the existing statute. He has one year to pay the full sum. If he does not, the *Hezkat ha-Kehilla* becomes null and void.²⁵

Table VI: Hezkat ha-Kehilla, Summer 1833 (in Gulden)

Moses Ornstein	150 (negotiated down to 100)
David Gross	100
Judah Spitz	100
Moses Goldenberger	100
Zalman Adler	100
David Englander	150

Source: *Pinkas ha-Kehilla* (1833) p. 69.

By the end of the 1830s, the Kehilla added a character evaluation in deciding whether or not to award a residence permit. This character evaluation assessed the petitioners place of origin, personal conduct, occupation, and reputation:

We the tribunal of the Israelite Community of the city of Miskolc attest that the Israelite named Hyman Friedman, who hails from Szendrő in our County, notifying the community on the occasion of his move here, and producing proof of his upright demeanor, seeking out sustenance poorly but in an honorable manner, the smallest complaints against his personal demeanor, which were justly sought out, never have coming to pass, we issue this affirmed letter of testimony with official seal.²⁶

The applicant's religious practice or belief, it should be noted, was not part of this character evaluation. This is not surprising given that, during the 1830s, Reform Judaism had made few inroads in Hungary and Orthodoxy was confined to Pressburg and a few neighboring communities. The vast majority of Hungarian Jews were religiously traditional but not excessively so. In a generation unshorn by religious ex-

tremism and strife, the leaders of the Kehilla were concerned primarily with allowing forthright, productive Jews to settle while excluding Jews from Galicia.²⁷

If the *Heẓkat ha-Kehilla* was indicative of the Kehilla expanding the benefits offered by the Burial Society, the tax on kosher meat underlined the way that the Kehilla modified divisions of membership used by the Burial Society. The membership of the Burial Society was divided between full members and *Malatsches*, and between service and non-service members. The Kehilla did away with the former and then further divided the latter into three classes, each of which was assigned an annual tax for the right to purchase kosher meat. The highest class paid an annual meat tax of 27 Gulden, the middle class 18, and the lowest class 9.

By 1833 it was no longer possible to obtain kosher meat, overtly at least, without enrolling in one of these membership classes, or, for those who could not afford the lowest fee, by applying for meat as a form of communal charity. In either case, the acquisition of kosher meat required a coupon provided by the Kehilla. This means of differentiating between community members was not unique to Miskolc. As Ruth Kestenberg-Gladstein noted: "It appears...that even among Jews there was a social order based on estates and there was no parity of birth in it. A Jew, too, was born into a definite Jewish estate."²⁸

There were two crucial differences between the *Heẓkat ha-Kehilla*, and the tax on kosher meat. First, in addition to generating revenue, the slaughter and sale of kosher meat became a medium for legitimate commercial endeavors between the Kehilla and local magistrates, in contrast to the semi-legitimate annual bribes and gifts. In January, 1834, the Kehilla invited Chief Magistrate Károly Soltész and two members of the Miskolc city council to invest in the sale of kosher meat as *Bankherren*:

The *Bankherr* Károly Soltész has accepted a contract that obligates him to underwrite the cost of the first bench for three years, to provide equipment for the slaughter of kosher meat, and to give 24 Gulden to the treasury of the Kehilla... Herr Kupfer and Herr Bartfa have committed for one year to underwrite the cost of the second bench. The appointed *Bankherren* will designate a square where kosher meat can be chopped by a hacker acceptable to the Kahal.²⁹

Second, the Kehilla's control over the slaughter of Kosher meat had a clear religious overtone—the complex rabbinic regulations regarding the slaughter, preparation, and distribution of kosher meat.³⁰ Perhaps a generation after a heated public dispute between Hasidic Jews in Russia and Hungary over the proper shape of the slaughtering knife, ritual slaughter was a potentially incendiary part of communal life.³¹

In order to inure this vital communal service from religious disputes, the Kehilla claimed the right to determine unilaterally whether or not a particular slaughterer conformed to the dictates of Jewish law. The Kehilla's response to maverick slaughterers who sold meat in Miskolc without the approval of the Kehilla, or to cases when there was a concern regarding a particular slaughterer's of the maverick in question, was an indicator of its authority in religious matters. Typically, there were two courses of action available to the Kehilla: ostracizing the perpetrator and undermining his religious reputation; or subordinating the perpetrator. An early test of these courses of action, reminiscent the Burial Society's effort to apply its rules to affluent members, occurred in May, 1833 involving Moses Baum, an affluent slaughterer from an elite family:

Moses Baum is accused of roasting kosher and unkosher meat on the same bench. He is deemed disreputable, and is strictly forbidden from continuing... *Even though he can afford to be regarded as unfit, he should cease lest he become a despised outsider* once it is publicized that, although his slaughterhouse is kosher, he roasted kosher and *traifé* meat together on one stool, thus rendering his slaughterhouse *traifé*...³²

The Kehilla brought Baum under its control by appointing him as one of four ritual slaughterers who were given a monopoly over the slaughter and sale of Kosher meat in Miskolc. In exchange for this recognition, Baum and the other slaughterers accepted the status of *Meshubadim*, or employees of the Kehilla. In exchange, they received an annual salary that made them the highest paid Jewish communal servants in the county other than the rabbi. In addition to having the sole right to practice their trade and sell their product, each butcher received free room and board for himself and his family, and a guarantee that anyone serving meat at a wedding or other festive banquet

would have to obtain meat from one of these four slaughterers. They also received a semi-annual “*Nissan-Tishrei* bonus” for their extra work around the Jewish Holidays.³³

Working for the Kehilla, however, had certain drawbacks. As employees of the Kehilla, unmarried slaughterers had to request permission from the Kehilla if they wanted to marry. Their moral conduct had to be above reproach, and they had to attend religious services on all Jewish holidays. Despite these restrictions, all four of the ritual slaughterers requested annually to continue to work for the Kehilla.

The Kehilla’s tightening control over ritual slaughter, however, prompted dissent among slaughterers who were not hired by the Kehilla. These men were relegated to the less prestigious occupation of meat cutter or butcher (*Hacker* as opposed to *Shochet*). From time to time, the meat cutters lobbied the Kehilla to hire them as ritual slaughterers, with partial success. The Kehilla hired them but only as meat cutters: “At this meeting two meat cutters appeared and requested to demonstrate their loyalty since their standing is not respected...It is decided that they will remain meat cutters, but will receive some support from the Kehilla treasury.”³⁴ Some meat cutters tried to evade the Kehilla-enforced monopoly by appealing directly to the *Bankherren*—again to no avail, as “several *Bankherren*, especially Herr Fischer, refused to provide meat to Mordechai the meat cutter.”³⁵

The synagogue

As with ritual slaughter, controlling the main synagogue of Miskolc had religious overtones in addition to the potential for generating profit. The manner in which the Kehilla managed the synagogue, moreover, clearly delineated between the religious and economic dimensions of communal administration, particularly with regard to the sale of synagogue seats. What Gershon Hundert noted with regard to Opatów was true in Miskolc: “The main synagogue not only provided income to the community from the sale of pews and honors, it was also the setting for the imposition of communal discipline... Instructions were read to the community there, bans were proclaimed and announcements were made.”³⁶

The growth of the Jewish community after 1828 created a shortage of pews in the main synagogue. In 1833, a smaller prayer house was condemned, prompting the forty families that had been praying there to relocate to the already overcrowded main synagogue. The situation became urgent in July, 1833, when Leib Schach, a cantor from Makó, turned down an offer to lead High Holiday services because of the lack of decorum in the synagogue.³⁷

In order to create a more orderly and less crowded atmosphere, the leaders of the Kehilla assigned pews in the synagogue to member families, and then offered the assignees the option to keep or sell their pews:

At this assembly it was noted that the confusion in the great synagogue has not dwindled...thus the scribe is instructed that all pews in the great synagogue, both in the men and women's section, should be allowed to be numbered, and it will be announced in the coming year that each owner of a pew should notify Joseph Natur in the next four weeks, indicating his interest to sell... Those uninterested in selling should also make it known...³⁸

Between July and October 1833, during the months leading up to the High Holidays, 114 member-families of the Kehilla claimed their pews in the men's and women's section of the synagogue. They were assigned these pews in perpetuity, with the right to bequeath ownership to their children and the option to sell them subsequently at their discretion.³⁹ Ownership of a pew in the synagogue became a valuable commodity that could be traded or used for charitable purposes. Ber Katz, for example, repaid the 130 Gulden that he owed to Yidl Ernst by giving her his pew.⁴⁰ When Simcha Braun sold his two pews to newcomers, it was deemed "an act of kindness" [*Gemilut Hesed*] by the Burial Society.⁴¹

Given the value of a pew, it is not surprising that dozens of complaints regarding ownership or acquisition came before the tribunal of the Kehilla.⁴² The Kehilla dealt more with synagogue pews than with anything else during 1835 and the first half of 1836. In response, the Kehilla appointed Adolph Fleischer as a special advocate to handle matters related to the sale and acquisition of pews.⁴³

The lawsuits that Fleischer heard divided into two categories. In some cases, usually those in which at least one wealthy family was in-

volved, the suit concerned not whether or not the parties involved had purchased a pew, but which pew they were entitled to. The tribunals settled these cases quickly, usually by convincing the two parties to settle their differences among themselves.⁴⁴

More confrontational were those cases in which members of the same family claimed the same pew. In 1847 Jacob Müller and his sister each claimed to be the rightful inheritor of their parents' pew. Initially, the Kehilla's tribunal denied Jacob Müller's claim, but after he enlisted the support of his other sister Czili, who testified that their step-father Peter Groszman had promised Jacob the pew, the tribunal ordered the siblings to compromise:

As a result of his step-father Peter Groszman's assurance that the pew belongs to him [i.e. Müller], and requests that Müller be given 30 silver coins...we enjoin Müller to accept that...the pew in the men's section of the synagogue be divided between him and his sister Rebecca; and that the fifty be divided between them, 30 to Müller and 20 to Rebecca.⁴⁵

Two months later, Müller purchased the pew outright from his sister.⁴⁶

Haggling over synagogue pews went on for years and, by 1847, had become disruptive enough for the Kehilla to outlaw such transactions in the synagogue: "The selling of pews cannot take place in the synagogue, but only in the community building at 2 p.m. on Sundays."⁴⁷ In some cases, the Kehilla used the synagogue as leverage in conflicts with its members. In one dispute: "János Kommissar was incarcerated for 8 days because he derogated the Kehilla and was recalcitrant. The members of the Kehilla have withdrawn his synagogue privileges."⁴⁸

Ownership of a synagogue pew, while it directly affected an individual's experience during the prayer service, was regarded more as an economic than a religious issue. This is evidenced from cases involving women, particularly women from affluent elite families. Although confined by Jewish law and custom to the women's section, elite Jewish women still had leverage in the distribution of synagogue pew. Typically, heads of households bought seats for themselves and for their wives and children. These seats were considered property, and passed to the owner's heirs. Hence, widows or daughters could inherit

them. Women who inherited their father's or husband's seat were not allowed to sit in these seats, but they did decide who could occupy them. Certain seats—such as the seat adjacent to the Holy Ark or along the eastern wall—carried a religious prestige that these women could apportion to men.⁴⁹

In one instance, the seat in question belonged to Yidl Brody, sister-in-law of Wolf Brody, who had inherited the seat from her late husband, Brody's brother. The plaintiff in this case was a recent immigrant who claimed that, as the male head of a household, his right to the seat superceded hers. He asked, at the very least, that the tribunal compel her to sell or rent him the seat. Yidl Brody refused on the grounds that the seat had sentimental value to her and her family, and asked the tribunal to consider the contributions of her brother-in-law. After a brief deliberation, the Bet Din ruled in her favor and she was allowed to hold onto her seat. This case revealed the extent to which the standing of women like Yidl Brody in the community could overcome gender-based disadvantages in certain cases. At the very least, an affluent, well-connected women could, in some cases, receive preferential treatment with respect to a rank and file man.

Moreover, this case underlined how, in a traditional community like Miskolc, the advantages of elite status did not extend into the realm of religious observance. There was no question as to whether the widow Brody could sit in the seat: Jewish law prohibited her or any other woman from praying in the men's section of the synagogue. Although the case involved a synagogue related matter, it did not challenge the religious precept that barred women from sitting in the men's section of the synagogue. Rather, it dealt with the synagogue seat as a question of property rights. In this sense, Yidl Brody's influence in the synagogue anticipated that of the women's association in communal life. She had no interest in upending the strictures of traditional Judaism, but wanted merely to preserve it and participate in it.

By the mid-1830s, however, distinguishing economic and commercial dimensions of synagogue management became increasingly complex. In communities that were embroiled in a dispute between religious reformers and their traditionalist opponents, in particular, marriage in the synagogue became a shibboleth distinguishing between the two camps.⁵⁰ In Miskolc, this was not a source of conflict.

On the contrary, the issue of marriage in the synagogue became more of an economic matter than a cause for religious conflict. For this reason, the attitude of the Kehilla toward marriage in the synagogue is a useful measure as to the religious posture of the community: "It is strictly instructed that no weddings be permitted in the great synagogues, unless the 10 Gulden school fee has been received by the Kehilla..."⁵¹ The Kehilla endorsed neither the traditionalist nor reform stand on this issue, opting instead to treat the matter as a commercial and administrative issue and not a religious one. The casualness with which the leaders of the Kehilla responded to what was elsewhere a point of religious controversy prefigured a broader trend in the community's religious posture, a trend that was even more visible with respect to the search for a new rabbi.

The rabbi

By the end of the 1830s, the Miskolc rabbinate exemplified the dichotomy in communal administration between the Kehilla's religious and financial concerns. A more complex and sensitive issue than ritual slaughter, management of the synagogue, or any other facet of communal administration that the Kehilla had hitherto addressed, the expansion of Miskolc rabbinate tested the ability of the Kehilla to expand its institutional infrastructure while subordinating even the most revered of religious dignitaries—the community rabbi. By the end of the decade, for the first time, the community had a rabbinic figure who rivaled his counterparts in more established and prestigious communities in Hungary; this was the first step toward extending its authority beyond Miskolc.

At the same time, the search culminated the efforts of communal leaders to consolidate their authority over Miskolc Jewry. Moses Ezekiel Fischmann, who was appointed chief rabbi in 1835 and held this position for more than thirty years, would first join and then replace Wolf Brody as the moral center of the community and a stabilizing presence in communal affairs. The reverence accorded him by Miskolc Jewry, however, leaders and rank and file alike, never altered the fact that he was a communal servant whose contract could be termi-

nated by the communal leadership at any time. The search for a new rabbi, both in its impetus and end-result, thus reflected the community's coming of age during the 1830s.

The point of departure for the search was the death of Abraham Posselburg, the previous rabbi, in 1832. Posselburg had come to Miskolc from Sajóalgóc in 1800 and had been the community rabbi until his death. By 1828 his salary had been paid jointly by the Burial Society and the County Assembly.⁵² Posselburg's death coincided with the emergent challenges facing the Kehilla leaders during the 1830s; the search for his successor, therefore, is a useful indicator of the Kehilla's use of the rabbinate to meet these challenges.

Two rabbis with very different qualifications emerged as possible successors to Posselburg: David Weiner and Abraham Wohl. Weiner belonged to an elite family; his father, Anshel Weiner, had been an officer of the Burial Society and the members of the County Council, and, a year later, could be chosen as an officer of the Kehilla. Following Posselburg's death, David Weiner had been hired by the Miskolc Kehilla as interim rabbi on a year-to-year basis. In addition to receiving an annual salary, he sat on the Miskolc tribunal. In 1833, he was appointed beadle.

Wohl, on the other hand, held no official position. He had no role in a communal tribunal and was not part of an elite family. Born in Moravia, he had migrated to Miskolc in 1826. Once in Miskolc he ran his own *Bet Midrash*, or house of study. He was a rabbi in the traditional sense, preaching and expounding on matters of Jewish law. He had a large following. For several years, his supporters rented a large hall every Saturday at the inn of Feivel Fleischer. There, Wohl addressed scores of students; among those in attendance was an "eager spirited student named Abraham Hochmuth," who, a decade later, would be appointed superintendent of Jewish schools in Miskolc.⁵³

In the eyes of the Kehilla leaders, however, neither Wohl nor Weiner was deemed an ideal candidate to head a revamped Miskolc rabbinate. The Kehilla was looking for a rabbi who combined old and new characteristics—an accomplished Talmudic scholar, an orator to speak on contemporary issues, a pastoral leader to provide moral and ethical guidance and inspiration, and an ambassador to other Jewish communities and to the non-Jewish world. Weiner had strong ties to

the Miskolc Jewish elite, competent administrative ability, and was subservient to the Kehilla's executive. However, he lacked the oratory skills and charisma necessary for a growing community.

Wohl, on the other hand, was a maverick whom the Kehilla feared might be difficult to control as effectively as it controlled its other employees.⁵⁴ What's more, he tended to isolate himself from communal affairs. Abraham Hochmut, his most famous student, contrasted the "calm and order of the Bet Midrash with the heated disputes between the various factions that ravaged the peace of the Jewish community in Miskolc."⁵⁵

The search for a chief rabbi began in May 1833 and lasted nearly two years, during which time the Kehilla offered the position to three candidates: one from Győr, in Western Hungary, who had been recommended by the rabbinate of Pressburg and Nyitra; one from Mád, in neighboring Zemplén County, and a third from a town referred to only as M. Each candidate accepted the position, but, after investigating the state of Jewish communal life in Miskolc, rejected the offer. Most egregious in this regard was the candidate from Győr, who sent a letter of acceptance to the Kehilla during the summer of 1834, and then a second letter withdrawing his candidacy only a few days before the High Holidays. The candidate from Mád, after being offered the position, accepted another position, in the town of Makó. He apologized, claiming that he had had every intention of coming until "I became aware that there are individuals there [i.e. in Miskolc] who break the faith, and the desecration of the name of God is astonishing."⁵⁶

By 1835, the leaders of the Kehilla had concluded that the problem lay in allowing the Kehilla's general membership to have input in the search:

We must use our connections and acquaintances because it is essential for the Kehilla to have a rabbi. If a candidate is recommended by one of the officers and we find him acceptable then we can place him before the Kehilla for ratification. In this way, we can avoid the disagreements that caused us to delay and lose the previous candidate.⁵⁷

Three months later they interviewed Rabbi Ezekiel Moses Fischmann, the rabbi of Schaffa, Moravia. Fischmann was born in Iglau, Moravia in 1794, and later succeeded his father as the rabbi of Schaffa, Mora-

via, before coming to Miskolc in 1836. He and his wife, Anna Berger, had five children while in Schaffa between 1824 and 1833, and a sixth a year after they arrived in Miskolc.⁵⁸ Fischmann arrived in time for Passover of 1836, and his oratory pleased the community so much that the membership approved his contract the following day. He was formally installed on 30 July.

Fischmann's role as rabbi and his relationship to the Kehilla and its leadership personified the hybrid character that the Kehilla had been hoping to hire. His role was a mixture of old and new rabbinic types. Like the classic rabbi, he was named *Av-Bet-Din*, or head of the tribunal. He was afforded the signs of respects: everyone rose when he came into the room, even the communal elite.

On the other hand, he was a salaried employee of the Kehilla who could be dismissed at any time. In this sense, Fischmann's role as a salaried professional reflected the professionalization of the rabbinate on a continental scale.⁵⁹ Although they paid Fischmann more than twice as much as they paid any other communal servant, and nearly twice what they had paid his predecessor David Weiner, they still regarded Fischmann as a communal servant. Initially hired for a three-year term, his original contract was extended to ten years, and then renewed in 1846 for a second ten-year term:

On the occasion of this assembly's final recommendation regarding the annual salary of the county chief rabbi, in accordance with the opinion of the County Israelites and the decision found in the 1833 minutes...the commitment to the county chief rabbi Moses Fischmann is extended for an additional 10 years.⁶⁰

Fischmann's role as rabbi, moreover, personified the way a communal institution whose primary function was religious could further the Kehilla's administrative aims. In December 1836, Fischmann complained of the periodic difficulty in assembling a *Minyan*, or prayer quorum, on minor fast days. He cited a statute from the Protocols of the Burial Society that required all of its members to attend these services, and asked the leaders of the Kehilla to require mischievous boys to attend these services. Instead, the leaders of the Kehilla applied the statute in a modified form to the entire membership:

Regarding the rabbi's proposal concerning mischievous youth: all of our fellow Jews who live here and are thirteen years old and older are obligated to observe this commandment and participate in the said services. They can also purchase an exemption from this obligation, at a rate according to their membership class: first class pays 36, second class 18, third class 9.⁶¹

Fischmann's arrival did not preclude Abraham Wohl from operating a *Bet Midrash*. On the contrary, the Kehilla, recognizing that Wohl had a large popular following, debated whether to allow him to preach in the synagogue—a task otherwise reserved exclusively for Fischmann. Finding themselves caught between satisfying public opinion and protecting the prestige of their most revered public servant, the Kehilla compromised:

The following is the resolution on behalf of the reverend Abraham Wohl...since there is no prospect that Wohl be permitted to preach in the temple, we submit this letter in the name of concord, peace, and tranquility among us. We unanimously agree that on Saturday and Holidays, excluding the new year and the Day of Atonement, Wohl be allowed to speak in the temple, but only during the afternoon hours, in this way the devoted will not disturb the orderly routine of the temple. (signed) Farkas Brody, Moritz Czukermandl, Jacob Rewsofski⁶²

Wohl's continued presence and popularity, however, did not detract from Fischmann's ascending influence. By the end of the 1840s, Fischmann's duties as head of the tribunal included supervising and inspecting the slaughter of kosher meat, for which he was provided with two apprentices and two assistants.⁶³ More important, Fischmann's prestige augmented the influence of Miskolc Kehilla's tribunal in the affairs of Jews elsewhere in Borsod County. At the beginning of the 1830s, the Miskolc Kehilla was not always consulted in county matters. In 1832, during the dispute between the Jews of Hejőcsaba, and their rabbi, Jonathan Alexanderssohn, neither side appealed to the Miskolc Kehilla for assistance or mediation, even though the three representatives from Pressburg spent the Sabbath in Miskolc:

Three rabbis were sent here by our beloved governor (statthalterei) to investigate the matter between the community of Csaba and their rabbi...two of them, the rabbis of Lovasberény and Aszód spent the Sabbath here and were honored by being invited to preach in the synagogue.⁶⁴

Instead, the Jews of Hejőcsaba appealed to the Pressburg rabbinate, even though Miskolc was only nine miles away. Miskolc, in other words, was not acknowledged as having jurisdiction in this matter, by Jews in Hejőcsaba or Pressburg, but merely as a bystander.

In sharp contrast, by the end of the 1830s, Jewish tribunals in smaller Jewish communities asked Fischmann and the tribunal he presided over to arbitrate local disputes. In one case, Fischmann was asked to settle a dispute in Görömböly, a small town in the Hejőcsaba District of Borsod County, over inheritance:

After the death of the late Ber Marcus of Görömböly a throng remained by the rabbi of Csaba to make sure he made proper arrangements for the deceased family according to the communal registry, but since the communal register did not indicate what to do, the matter left unsettled. The two disputants, Abraham of Ládház and J. Balajti of Görömböly presented themselves as caretakers on behalf of the orphans and were questioned, but it still was not possible to determine a solution from the registry... In response, the county chief rabbi summoned the two disputants to appear before him and the Csaba rabbi on the eighth day (one day after *Shiva*) to determine a proper course of action...⁶⁵

Another case involved the division of jurisdiction between local and district rabbis:

On the request of Felső Ábrány Rabbi Jacob Leichter, in which he asks that, following his agreement with the rabbi of Ábrány, he is not permitted to carry out any official tasks in Felső Ábrány district, and he steps across the agreement to have us order the district that the Rabbi of A not be used for official tasks. When the circumstances in the district become known to us, we will rule on this matter.⁶⁶

The emergence of a first-rate rabbinate in Miskolc by the end of the 1830s was a major step in Miskolc Jewry's coming of age, and in the ability of the Kehilla leadership to manage this growing, maturing community. The subordination of the rabbinate solidified the hold of lay leaders over all Jewish communal affairs, religious and otherwise. The predominance of lay leadership would be eventually tested by dissenting religious views that would appear in Hungary during the 1840s and intensify during the 1860s.

In the end, the Kehilla never acquired the ability to prevent anyone from settling. The growth of the town and its Jewish community facilitated illegal residence more so than the Kehilla was able to impede it. At the same time, the Kehilla could discourage settlement by refusing to grant a residence permit, or by denying access to kosher meat or to a pew in the synagogue. The fees attached to kosher meat and the competition over synagogue pews further enhanced the Kehilla's ability to discourage unwanted arrivals. By the end of the 1830, immigration from Galicia had slowed to a trickle; from this point on, population growth would be largely a result of biological increase, which the Kehilla was only too happy to encourage.

The dwindling of immigration from Galicia could not have been more opportune. It coincided with the issue of Jewish immigration from Galicia taking center stage in the emerging public debate over Jewish emancipation and the inclusion of Jews in the Magyar nation. By obstructing immigration, Jews in Miskolc proved their willingness to meet what was quickly becoming a central condition for emancipation and gauge of whether Jews could be absorbed by the Magyar nation. The willingness of Jews to meet this condition was a double-edged sword. It won the support of outspoken political reformers; but it also reinforced the disdain with which Hungarian statesmen, liberal and conservative alike, regarded for Jews from Galicia. This disdain would be woven into all subsequent debates and legislation regarding Jewish emancipation and assimilation.

Ultimately, the leadership and financial support of the Miskolc Kehilla would help smaller communities develop their own institutions. Ironically, as these smaller communities developed their own array of communal institutions, they would eventually attempt to throw off the yoke of Miskolc and democratize the County-Kehilla. For the moment, though, the preeminent position of Miskolc Jewry was undeniable. During the 1840s, they would take the final steps toward developing a fully matured communal framework and cementing their position over Borsod County—expanding the network of communal schools.

Notes

- 1 *Protocolle* p. 226:b #2, (April 30, 1835).
- 2 Dobrossy, *Miskolc története* III/1, p. 480.
- 3 Ibid., p. 427 and 495–496.
- 4 Salo W. Baron, *The Jewish Community: Its History and Structure to the American Revolution*, vol 1, p. 208.
- 5 Michael Graetz, “From Corporate Community to Ethnic-Religious Minority, 1750–1830” *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 37 (1992) pp. 72–74.
- 6 Robert Liberles, “Emancipation and the Structure of the Jewish Community in the Nineteenth Century” *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* XXXI (1986) p. 52.
- 7 Jay Berkovitz, *The Shaping of Jewish Identity in Nineteenth Century France* (Detroit, 1989) p. 87.
- 8 Ruth Kestenberg-Glatstein, *Neuere Geschichte der Juden Böhmischen Ländern* (Mohr Sieback Press: Tübingen, 1969), p. 67.
- 9 Katzburg, in his compendium of Hungarian Jewish communities, lists fewer than fifteen Jewish communities that had a population of more than 100 by 1790, most of which were located in Sopron, Vas, and Moson—three western Hungarian counties.
- 10 Rosman, “The Role of Non-Jewish Authorities in Resolving Conflicts,” p. 62.
- 11 *Protocoll fun der löbliche Borchoder* [sic] *Comitat israelitischen Gemeinde welch dieses jahr erschafte worden ist* (Miskolc, 1825), title page.
- 12 Ibid., p. 2. (January, 1825).
- 13 *Protocoll be-Hadash* p. 25:b #1 (January 30, 1820).
- 14 See, for example, *ibid.*, p. 4.
- 15 “Wolf Brody and the other Deputies assembled in the *Bet ha-Kahal*; at which time...the members of the Kehilla (*Ansbei Bnai ha-Kehilla*) bid openly to buy the wine from the Burial Society’s vineyards, according to the statute that stipulates *Hoshana Rabba* as the customary time for the sale of the wine...” Ibid., p. 43:b #28 (October 15 1826). Oddly enough, sometimes the purchaser was an officer of the Burial Society who was also a member of the County Assembly. See *ibid.*, p.50:b #1 (October 11, 1829).
- 16 *Binyan Hekdesh*, literally a sanctified building, referred to Jewish homes for the aged. In twentieth century parlance, a Hekdesh has a negative connotation, and has come to refer to a run-down, poorly managed Jewish home for the aged. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, before assisted-care facilities were standard features of urban life, the Hekdesh was an important supplement to the local hospital, and a indispensable alternative when there was no hospital. Sylvie Goldberg noted that the *Hekdesh* differed from parallel Christian institutions in that the latter generally served only indigenous sick and poor people; the *Hekdesh* treated outsiders and itinerants as well, sometimes primarily. Goldberg, *Crossing the Jabboke*, pp. 188-191.
- 17 Ibid., p. 49:a #32 (February 12, 1829).
- 18 Ibid., p. 46:b #3 (September 29, 1828).

- 19 Dobrossy, *Miskolc története* III/2 p. 626; Tamás Csiki, *Városi zsidóság északkelet- és kelet-Magyarországon* [Urban Jews in Northeastern and Eastern Hungary] (Budapest, 1999) p. 123.
- 20 "I appeal to Jews in Miskolc to support the *Hekdesh* which will be for all Jews in our community." As head of the council he increased the tax on kosher meat to cover construction costs: "...this will mean a 1/3 increase in the meat tax from 9/1/1828 through 9/1/1829 to be used for building the Hekdesh." Ibid., p. 46:b #3 (September 29, 1828).
- 21 Ibid., p. 50:b #2. "Copy of a letter from Wolf Brody to the leaders of our *Kehilla*" (October 17, 1829).
- 22 Ibid., p. 50:b #3 (Italics mine).
- 23 Ibid., p. 51:a #4.
- 24 *Pinkas ha-Kehilla* p. 2 (May 4, 1833).
- 25 *Pinkas ha-Kehilla* p. 67 (October 7, 1833).
- 26 *Protocole*, p. 334:a #225 (April 13, 1840).
- 27 The exception to this rule were Hasidic Jews who were excluded not because of religious behavior but because of their Galician origins.
- 28 Kesternberg-Gladstein, "Differences of Estates within Pre-Emancipation Jewry," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 5 (1964) p. 157.
- 29 Ibid., p. 81. (January 17, 1834).
- 30 The regulations pertaining to ritual slaughter are summarized in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 6 pp. 27–28.
- 31 On Hasidic controversies involving ritual slaughter, see David Assaf, "'Money for Household Expenses': Economic Aspects of the Hasidic Courts" *Scripta-Hierosolymitana* 38 (1998) pp. 15–16; Isaiah Kuperstein, "Inquiry at Polainec: a Case Study of a Hassidic Controversy in 18th Century Galicia" *Bar Ilan Annual* 24–25 (1987) especially pp. 27–30.
- 32 *Pinkas ha-Kehilla*, p. 11–13. (May 16, 1833) (Italics mine).
- 33 *Pinkas Ha-Kehilla*, p. 3. (May 5, 1833). The *Nissan-Tisbrei* bonus referred to the fact that most of the major Jewish Holidays fall in the Hebrew months of *Nissan* and *Tisbrei*, hence these two months were the busiest for kosher meat slaughterers.
- 34 *Pinkas ha-Kehilla*, p. 9. (May 12, 1833).
- 35 *Protocole*, p. 367:b #34 (January 16, 1841).
- 36 Hundert, *Opatów*, p. 140.
- 37 *Pinkas ha-Kehilla*, p. 33. (July 6, 1833).
- 38 Ibid., p. 35. (July 14, 1833) "following the visit of the Hazzan Leib Schach from Makó."
- 39 A typical contract read as follows: In the men's section of the great synagogue, here in the holy congregation of Miskolc, pew #44, located along the northern wall, the eleventh from the eastern end; and in the women's section, the third pew from the northern wall, hereby belong in perpetuity to Schrefel Sokol and his family... Agreed upon this day September 1, 1833. *Protokol Min Ha-Mekomot She-Be-Bet Ha-Knesset Ha-Gedolah* [Protocols of the Great Synagogue, Hebrew/Yiddish-Deutsch] (Miskolc, 1833) p. 5:a.

- 40 *Protocolle* p. 231:a #41. (June 21, 1835).
- 41 *Protokol be-Hadash* 80:a #46 (October 2, 1834).
- 42 The communal record listed 31 cases between December 1834 and January 1836.
- 43 *Protocolle* p. 231:a #41 (June 21, 1835).
- 44 See, for example, *ibid.*, pp. 234:a–235:b.
- 45 *Cultusgemeinde* (1847) p. 32–33 #63 (June 13, 1847) and p. 39 #77 (June 29, 1847).
- 46 *Ibid.*, p. 56 #109. (August 22, 1847).
- 47 *Ibid.*, p. 55 # 108 (August 22, 1847).
- 48 *Protocolle* p. 229:a #24 (May 30, 1835).
- 49 *Protocolle*, p. 275:a. #66 (April 3, 1837).
- 50 Paraphrasing the Westphalian *Synagogenordnung* of 1810, which was the basis much of subsequent Reform doctrine, Michael Meyer noted that a wedding ceremony “was to take place under a canopy (*hupah*) in a candle-lit synagogue immediately in front of the holy ark. Under no circumstances might the wedding, *in accordance with the traditional practice*, be held out of doors...” Michael A. Meyer, *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism* (New York, 1988) p. 35.
- 51 *Pinkas ha-Kehilla* p. 45 (August 18, 1833).
- 52 Quoted in Dobrossy, *Miskolc története*, III/2 pp. 946–947.
- 53 Mór Klein, “Abraham Hochmuth” in *Magyar Zsidó Szemle*, vol. VI (1889), p. 408.
- 54 *Pinkas ha-Kehilla* p. 107 (January, 1834).
- 55 Both excerpts are in Klein, “Hochmuth,” p. 405–406.
- 56 *Pinkas ha-Kehilla*, p. 107 (February 19, 1834).
- 57 *Ibid.*, p. 109.
- 58 *Conscriptum Judaeorum* (Miskolc, 1848). Fischmann is best known for the attack against him by ultra-Orthodox rabbis during the 1860s, which is discussed in detail in chapter 9.
- 59 See, Ismar Schorsch, “Emancipation and the Crisis of Religious Authority: The Emergence of the Modern Rabbinate,” in Werner E. Mosse ed., *Revolution and Evolution: 1848 in German-Jewish History* (Tübingen, 1981), pp. 205–247, especially 227–230.
- 60 *Jegyzőkönyv*, p. 63:a #55 (February 16, 1845).
- 61 *Protocolle*, p. 266:B #143 (Dec 22, 1836)
- 62 *Protocolle*, p. 334:a-b #228 (April 13, 1840).
- 63 *Cultusgemeinde*, p. 11 #17 (May 6, 1847).
- 64 *Protocolle* p. 231:a #39 (June 21, 1835). On the dispute between the Jews of Hejcsaba and Alexanderssohn, see Jacob Katz, “The Alexanderssohn Affair: An Obscure Episode in the Life of the Hatam Sofer,” (Hebrew) in *Zion LXXXII*. (1992).
- 65 *Jegyzőkönyv*, p. 37:b-38:a #20 (February 15, 1842). *Shiva* refers to the initial seven days of mourning the dead, during which time the bereaved remain at home and refrain from public affairs.
- 66 *Jegyzőkönyv*, 8:a #35 (August 30, 1840).

Chapter 6

Education Reform and Religious Identity

It was in Miskolc that the second revolution in my thinking took place. There I was thrust from a world of Talmud into a refreshing, delightful life where the greater world was accessible to me, with all of its multifarious interests—nature and its beauty, the human spirit with its malice and devilishness—and I began to realize that I had moved beyond my insularity. There I saw something that, as a Jew, I had never dreamt of seeing: inner awe giving way more and more. I was in danger of deteriorating into a flat, hollow rationalism that despised humanity and despaired of finding virtue.¹

Miskolc is a Jewish Community in which piety is found alongside an aspiration for *Bildung*.²

Wolf Brody died in the summer of 1841. News of his death reverberated beyond Miskolc. The *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums* printed his obituary on June 30, 1842, the first anniversary of his death, while reporting a communal memorial service:

Recently, a man named Wolf Brody died. He lived for a long stretch of time in Miskolc and acquired a considerable fortune through diligence and hard work. Through his conduct and readiness to assist one and all, he won the admiration not only of his own community but of the entire region. This upright man died last year, to the sorrow of the entire community, but he left behind a detailed will, which will enshrine his name in the memory of his fellow men.³

Whether they realized it at the time or not, Brody's death signaled the beginning of intra-communal disputes over the future of Jewish education. The resolution of these disputes, amid the nascent religious tensions that appeared elsewhere in Hungary during the 1840s, would

underline the willingness of Miskolc Jews to balance between tradition and innovation. During the 1840s, these disputes would revolve around changes in education. By the 1860s, these improvements became a foregone conclusion, the disputes would shift from the schoolhouse to the synagogue.

In Miskolc, the burden of improving education was shouldered almost single-handedly by the leading families of the Kehilla and by Wolf Brody in particular. Their central role would preserve a pragmatic rather than ideological direction in education reform. During the 1840s, amidst an emerging pressure that Jews embrace Magyar language and goals, the primary aim of education reform took shape: creating a dual curriculum that would, without offending the religious sensibilities of a traditional constituency, insure that Jews would acquire some working knowledge of the Magyar language and a patriotic affinity for Magyar nationalism. To this end, a second aim of education reform was added: making communal schools accessible to all children, including those who were indigent and orphaned; and to girls as well as boys.

After Brody's death, the entire enterprise of improving education became more complex. As the Jewish community increased in size, wealth and diversity, its members acquired the luxury of dividing along ideological lines and organizing separate schools. The spread of the Kehilla's domain across Borsod county, moreover, meant that Jewish leaders in Miskolc now dealt with an even larger and more diverse constituency. Against such potentially factious forces, Brody's posthumous success was made possible largely by his wealth and prestige, but also by the fortuitous convergence of traditional and progressive notions of education, most poignantly defended by Abraham Hochmuth and Pinchas Heilprin. Although control over the schools would emerge at the end of the 1840s as the source of intra-mural Jewish conflict, the revamped curriculum would embody Miskolc Jewry's aversion to extreme religious positions, be they progressive or traditionalist.

The tensions and conflicts over education in Miskolc were part of a broader critique of Jewish education in the Ashkenazic world that began at the end of the eighteenth century. Jewish education came under scrutiny at the end of the eighteenth century, both by enlight-

ened Jews who regarded Jewish educational institutions as the purveyors of stale and useless ideas, and by traditional Jews who regarded the schoolhouse as a bastion of tradition that had to be fortified at all costs in the face of new criticism. The simple fact is that every religious movement from the eighteenth century onward expressed dissatisfaction with Jewish education, whether in the Russian Empire, the New World, or anywhere in between.⁴

Despite the varied backgrounds and dissimilar aims of critics, it is possible to identify five basic criticisms of Jewish education from the end of the eighteenth century onward. First, there was a general agreement that the existing pedagogic method, instruction by rote, had to be replaced by a more effective and efficient model. Second, the physical environment of the classroom and schoolhouse had to conform to an acceptable standard of hygiene. Third, there was a need to provide first-rate education to all Jewish children, regardless of wealth or family connections, and including orphans, the children of the poor and, in some cases, even girls. Fourth, it was commonly assumed that most of the shortcomings associated with Jewish education originated in communal educational institutions—the *Heder* and the *Talmud Torah*—and rarely from the private education that affluent Jewish youth received. Because many critics had themselves benefited from private Jewish tutors, who combined Jewish and secular scholarship, early critiques often attempted to recreate private Jewish education on a communal scale.⁵

Lastly, and most controversial in the discussions and debates of the period, was the desire to expand Jewish education beyond a bare curriculum of rudimentary biblical texts with rabbinic commentary. In some cases, a diminished interest in rabbinic texts fed a desire to add secular subjects, or to change the curriculum entirely. Even in communities where rabbinic scholarship retained its traditional preeminence there was a growing awareness not only that secular subjects—at the very least Hebrew grammar, mathematics, and astronomy—would complement the study of rabbinic texts, but also that the most consummate understanding of rabbinic literature presupposed at least some familiarity with these other subjects.⁶

The obstacles to improving education were not only religious and ideological, but also financial. Even the most fundamental innova-

tions—a wider variety of subjects, better teacher training, more hygienic buildings, and tuition-free education for the indigent—demanded an enormous financial commitment. This financial burden typically fell on the shoulders of the state, or, where the state was unwilling, unable, or uninterested, to the local Jewish economic elite, who were often comprised of the local or regional lay leadership. As a result, some combination of state officials and Jewish lay leaders had a decisive influence over educational reform. The immediate and long-range goals of these generally more pragmatic individuals did not always coincide with the idealistic aims of pedagogues and ideologues. State officials and Jewish lay leaders generally were concerned first and foremost with creating an economically productive and self-sufficient constituency, thus they emphasized practical innovations such as teaching the vernacular language, applied science and mathematics, and some artisanal trade, and had less interest in subjects such as philosophy and poetry.

As a result, tensions developed between those designing the changes in Jewish education and those paying to implement them. This tension was weakest in Western Europe and parts of Central Europe, where the state either allowed Jews to attend Christian schools or provided Jews with a separate state-sponsored school system, thus alleviating the financial impediments to reform. State endorsement made Jews in these parts of Europe generally amenable to these changes, so advocates of Jewish educational reform could implement extensive changes with few repercussions from the local rabbinate and still attract ample numbers of students. In those parts of Europe where government officials either had limited interest or minimal success in reforming Jewish education, establishing and operating a network of schools usually depended on the financial capabilities of individual Jewish communities. In effect, the financial burden fell to a few affluent and philanthropic Jews.

Religious conflicts over education were even more heated and complex. Funding efforts to build, staff, and equip new schools, after all, addressed only half of the problem. It was still necessary to convince Jewish parents to send their children to the schools. First, it was essential to convince parents—and especially affluent parents—that the proposed schools could provide education of comparable quality

to the education their children could receive elsewhere; second, it was imperative to allay concerns that the proposed changes conformed to Jewish law. Traditional Jews regarded education as a religious matter, thus innovations in the educational system required rabbinic approval. The introduction of secular subjects extended the debate into the volatile realm of religious practice, custom, and taboo. By the end of the eighteenth century, Jewish education emerged as a defining issue, and often the defining issue in intra-communal religious disputes.⁷

The religious component suggests that the changes in Jewish education must be analyzed and evaluated in light of concurrent religious developments. This is especially true when tracing religious changes that unfolded gradually without the clarion accompaniment of ideologically-charged polemics. In such instances, the boundaries between conflicting parties often remained fluid as both sides picked and chose from the same potpourri of ideas and practices. In the absence of a well-articulated and easily discernable ideological dispute, debates over education illuminated not only the conflicting views of the various factions, but also the gray area where the commonalities between them survived.

The 1830s: New challenges and new concerns

There was little attempt at improving the community schools in Miskolc prior to the 1830s. The limited mandate of the Burial Society, coupled with the relatively small number of school-age children in Miskolc prior to the 1830s, deterred communal leaders from serious action. Occasionally, the Burial Society took steps to provide education to the children of its members. In 1824, they included among the duties of the Sexton that “he is obligated to serve the members indefinitely and to teach their children for free.”⁸ In general, the Burial Society lacked the means to undertake such an endeavor on a large scale, thus it was not until the Kehilla replaced the Burial Society that such improvements took place.

The leaders of the Kehilla recognized communal education as a major priority. In 1835, in response to a petition from the Talmud Torah Society—a voluntary organization devoted to improving com-

munal education—Wolf Brody acknowledged the need to improve education, and imposed a tax to support this endeavor:

At this assembly the members of the Hevra Talmud Torah submitted a petition asking that the members of the Kehilla reorganize the Talmud Torah on the best possible basis, that the most affluent intervene on behalf of the poor who live here. Thus, the membership should be divided into three classes based on payment of a school tax: 30 forints/year, 20/year, and 10 forints/year. The fourth class, those who cannot pay, will be provided education for three years...⁹

Yet it would take another six years and a series of converging challenges to motivate the Kehilla to further action. These challenges included population growth and a rising demand for education, growing religious laxity, and external pressure to improve education. Once the Kehilla decided to act, moreover, it required the right combination of affluence, rabbinic support, and pedagogical expertise to make such action feasible. Until that point, the Kehilla settled for a series of stop gap solutions to much larger problems.

The arrival of a steady stream of Jewish migrants into Miskolc during the 1830s, alongside a rising birthrate, increased the number of school-age children substantially. According to city birth records and the state-wide Jewish census of 1848, more than half of the nearly three hundred Jews who settled in Miskolc from 1829–1839 were under twelve years old. Coupled with the three hundred born at this time, this meant that the number of school-age children in Miskolc increased by five hundred during the 1830s, a dramatic increase for a community that, in 1840, numbered fewer than 2,000 people.¹⁰

Table VII: Jewish Population Growth in Miskolc, 1829–1839

Year	1829	1830	1831	1832	1833	1834	1835	1836	1837	1838	1839	1829– 1839
Births	18	25	30	47	33	55	50	65	45	65	47	308
Arrivals	16	18	17	25	20	24	23	50	23	37	19	277
Total increase	34	43	47	72	53	79	73	115	68	102	66	585

Source: *Conscriptum Judaeorum* (Miskolc, 1848). Cited with permission of the Hungarian State Archive, Budapest.

In response, Brody impressed communal servants as temporary teachers to relieve the growing workload of Joseph Melamed.¹¹

Religious laxity

In addition to the strain of a growing Jewish population, the lackluster quality of Jewish education exacerbated concerns regarding an overall religious laxity in Miskolc, particularly public violations of the Sabbath. By the beginning of the 1840s, the task of combating religious laxity had fallen to the Burial Society, which, despite its reduced authority in communal matters remained an integral element in the communal effort to uphold religious propriety; and to Moses Ezekiel Fischmann:

At this meeting of the Burial Society our rabbi joined us to discuss the unimaginable act by one of our members who, according to two halachically suitable witnesses, publicly violated the Sabbath...It was decided that if the accused does not repent and mend his ways within one year he will be fined and his privileges will be suspended...if he repents he will have only to ask forgiveness from the members of the Burial Society.¹²

Periodically, Fischmann and the Burial Society sought the assistance of the Kehilla:

A petition submitted by the rabbi regarding people publicly desecrating the Sabbath asks that, since exhortation has been unfruitful and a stricter reprimand is necessary, the Kehilla take steps to supervise and to arrest those who do so... In response to this petition, it is decided that the most egregious offenders will be arrested.¹³

This growing religious indifference must be seen in context. Because of the predominant role of the Burial Society in communal affairs during the 1820s, the Jewish community had been exceptionally devout. By the end of the 1830s, the majority of Jews in Miskolc had settled there after the Burial Society no longer ran the community. Thus, the decline in piety during the 1830s signaled perhaps a return to more ordinary religious behavior.

The concerns over the state of Jewish education in Miskolc raised by the rapid growth in the number school-age children and religious laxity convinced the leadership that the time had come to improve communal education. Brody proposed the first concrete steps, but did not live to accomplish them. His influence would outlive him, and his aims would posthumously inform communal efforts to improve education.

New initiatives: *Lehrschul* and *Lehranstalt*

All totaled, Wolf Brody had left the Jewish community 46,900 Gulden to spend on communal expenses, not to mention an additional 20,000 Gulden for the construction of a new community building. Brody allocated this sum to a variety of recipients, and every last penny had an intended destination, including 10,000 Gulden for improving education.¹⁴

Table VIII: Wolf Brody's Will (Gulden)

Construction of a new synagogue	3,500
Construction of new schools	4,000
School fund	5,000
Hevra Kadisha	1,000
A new cover for the Ark	1,100
To the Loan Society	2,500
A new communal building for all these purposes	20,000
Synagogue seats	2,000
For families of the deceased	1,000
To provision poor children	800
Total	46,900

Source: *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums* no. 30 (1842) pp. 443–444.

The Brody education fund facilitated the first serious step in improving education and marked the first expansion of communal education beyond improvements to the Heder and the Talmud Torah, the traditional institutions of learning. Brody's posthumous education program included a mixed agenda of old and new ideas, as follows:

1) Kehilla leaders were to organize a commission to investigate the condition of the Talmud Torah, including the quality of the instructor, classroom decorum, and the students' temperament.

The commission would be led by two men, who would present two reports to the Kehilla. The commission was first to address the officers and delineate the shortcomings of the Talmud Torah. After consulting with the officers, the commission would visit the school again, determine the most expedient and effective solutions to the problems, and then present their conclusions to the full membership of the Kehilla.

2) Eight hundred Gulden were to be used to assure that every orphan and impoverished child in Miskolc had the opportunity to study in the Talmud Torah. The Talmud Torah students were to recite memorial prayers each year on the anniversary of Wolf Brody's death and pray for the welfare of his soul.

3) The Kehilla was to build a new *Bet Midrash*, or house of study, exclusively for the study of the Talmud. Outstanding graduates of the Talmud Torah would be invited to study in the Bet Midrash. In addition, the Kehilla should seek out outstanding students from other Jewish communities and invite them to study at the new Bet Midrash. These students would receive full membership in and enjoy the full support of the Kehilla; they would also receive a seat in the synagogue, full health benefits, and the opportunity to teach in any of the communal schools.

4) The Kehilla must ensure that the Talmud Torah and the Bet Midrash were adequately ventilated. Every room should have large, fenestral windows: 3 arm-spans wide by 6 arm-spans long.

5) The Kehilla should retire Joseph Melamed and reward him generously for his years of loyal service to the community and to Jewish children. He should be honored at a Kehilla public meeting that would be followed by a large banquet for the entire membership in his honor.

6) The Kehilla was to acquire property near the synagogue for two new schools—a *Lehrschul* and a *Lehranstalt*—and to hire an educated individual to organize and run these new schools. This person would be chosen by the school commission in consultation with the rabbi, teachers, and Kehilla officers. Brody did not indicate in his will spe-

cifically what he intended these new schools to be and left his colleagues the task of discerning his true intentions.¹⁵

Kehilla leaders organized the first commission on education in April 1842. In accordance with Brody's will, the Kehilla leaders instructed the commission to "condemn any censurable aspect of the Talmud Torah, but also to respect and comply with the wishes of the teachers there." At the same time, the Kehilla leadership rented the property of Aron Schwartzfeld and Moshe Onod for an annual rent of 50 Wiener Wendung to house the *Lehrschul*.¹⁶

Three months later, the commission's initial report indicated three problems. Financially, the Talmud Torah was in complete disarray. The Kehilla had twice postponed its payment on the banknote of the school. The teachers were paid erratically, if at all. Second, the school lacked decorum and discipline. Teachers had far more students than they could manage. Many of the students ran around and shouted and teachers were often unable to maintain order in the classroom. Finally, the commission noted the large number of orphans who could not, or did not, attend the Talmud Torah.¹⁷

The financial travails of the Talmud Torah and the lack of decorum were relatively simple problems. The Kehilla leaders allocated some of the money inherited from Wolf Brody to pay off the debt. By promoting one of the teachers to the position of head of the school, thus empowering him to expel any student who refused to cooperate, they alleviated the decorum problems. In order to ensure his authority over the students, the Kehilla leaders made the new head of school a quasi-officer of the Kehilla. He attended those meetings at which the Talmud Torah was discussed, but was not allowed to vote.¹⁸

The orphans, however, posed a more complex problem. Greenblatt, head of the education commission, suggested that the orphans attending the Talmud Torah aggravated both its financial and decorum problems. When an orphan acted disrespectfully the teacher could not enlist the cooperation of parents in disciplining the child. The community provided orphans with shelter and education, but the task of raising these children and instilling in them a proper set of morals fell on their teachers. For the sake of the other students, Greenblatt proposed, the Kehilla should establish a separate Talmud Torah exclusively for orphans.¹⁹

This conclusion brought a storm of protest and instigated a dispute that divided Kehilla leaders for nearly a decade. Although the immediate cause of the disagreement was the educational welfare of orphans, a larger issue emerged that forced communal leaders to decide between providing Jewish education to all Jewish children, including orphans, and improving the education that the Talmud Torah was already delivering.

This was the first time they had to reach a compromise without the moderating guidance and ultimate authority of Wolf Brody. Without Brody to arbitrate, the latest dispute over education threatened to divide the leaders of the Kehilla into factions, both sides claiming to be following Brody's instructions. Brody, in fact, had championed both high quality and complete accessibility as essential to Jewish education in Miskolc, so each side could make a case for its own point of view.

The Kehilla leaders deliberated for three months before reaching a four part compromise:

- 1) All orphans and abandoned children will be entitled to have the benefit of education. To this end, the Kehilla will build and manage a communal Lehrschul.²⁰

Greenblatt neither elaborated on the details of the Lehrschul at this point nor addressed who the teacher would be, but only stressed that the Lehrschul would provide education free of charge. Nor did Greenblatt indicate that the Kehilla intended the Lehrschul primarily as a separate school for orphans and poor children, although within two years all the students in attendance were either orphans or from poor families. Officially, at least, every Jewish boy, regardless of lack of wealth or family, could attend the Lehrschul.

- 2) In addition to the Lehrschul, the Kehilla will build a new primary school, which will be called the Brody Talmud Torah.

This school charged an annual tuition of 42 Wiener Wendung, a nominal fee at the time. The only boys excluded, therefore, were the most impoverished and orphans.

3) The Kehilla will locate and provide a benefactor from the Jewish community of Miskolc for each orphan. The benefactor will pay the costs of educating the orphaned or abandoned child and will assume full responsibility for the child.

This clause was a response to protests from those Kehilla leaders who anticipated the disparity between the Talmud Torah and the Lehrschul in terms of the quality of education and the caliber of students who attended each school. A benefactor would take responsibility not only for the nominal costs of school supplies, but also for the student's behavior and moral conduct. For orphans and indigent children who were willing or able to behave properly, a benefactor's support meant an opportunity to attend a better school. For the rest, the benefactor would, at least, assist teachers in disciplining unruly students. By finding members of the Jewish community to sponsor the orphans, the Kehilla was able to provide a surrogate parent for each of these children, who would help the student succeed in school.

4) The Kehilla will build a Lehranstalt for the training of Jewish teachers.

While this last provision originated in Wolf Brody's will, its inclusion was prompted by an attempt by rabbis elsewhere in Hungary to regularize Jewish education on a state-wide scale.

The reforms of Abraham Hochmuth

By 1844, the Kehilla had finished construction of the Bet Midrash that Brody had requested in his will, as well as the Lehrschul and the extension to the Talmud Torah school, and had begun to build the Lehranstalt. As the Lehranstalt neared completion, several leaders questioned whether anyone currently residing in Miskolc had the ability to run these new schools, particularly the Lehranstalt, effectively. As Kehilla leaders contemplated possible candidates for this position, it became clear that this decision would have ramifications beyond merely managing the three Jewish schools: the character of the schools, and especially the Lehranstalt, would have a decisive impact not only on Jewish education, but on other aspects of religious life in Miskolc.

Perhaps because they realized the importance of this position, Kehilla leaders could not agree on a suitable candidate for over two years. Some leaders wanted to import an expert on Jewish education from abroad, preferably from Moravia. These men pointed out the excellent service that Moses Ezekiel Fischmann, brought from Moravia, had rendered as a rabbi. A second group of leaders suggested that the Kehilla appoint a local teacher or scholar to this position, as he would have a more intimate understanding of Miskolc's educational needs than an outsider would.²¹

The leaders also disagreed regarding the character of the man they would hire. Some argued that, first and foremost, he should be an older, more experienced scholar who would command the respect of the Jewish community. Others argued that an older man would merely recreate or, at best, expand the same system of education that had already proved inadequate. These leaders wanted a younger man with a strong scholarly background and educational training.²²

Finally, in 1846, the Kehilla found a suitable candidate when Abraham Hochmuth returned from Prague after studying there for eight years.²³ During the next four years, Hochmuth would transform Jewish education, first in Miskolc and then throughout Borsod County. Moreover, his accomplishments in Miskolc would provide the blueprint for the state-wide reform of Jewish education during the 1850s.

In this regard, it is useful to contrast Hochmut's reform program with two failed state-wide attempts to reform Jewish education prior to 1848. In September of 1825, in response to the convening of the National Diet, representatives from thirteen counties in western Hungary met in Pressburg. Two proposals emerged from this conference. One, submitted by Rabbi Aryeh Leb Rapoch of Veszprem, essentially reiterated the traditional Jewish mode of education: it opposed any curricular changes, insisted that all Jewish schools be supervised by Talmudic scholars, and that all teachers adhere to the strictures of Jewish law. The other proposal, submitted by Rabbi Aron Chorin of Arad—the only delegate not from western Hungary—stressed the importance of incorporating secular education into the curriculum, and suggested that each community have a four-man council composed of a presiding officer, two rabbis, and a secretary to determine the teachers' competency.²⁴

At first glance, the conference accomplished little besides accentuating the budding differences between conservative and progressive views. In retrospect, the participants' religious differences accounted in large part for the conference's failure to produce any lasting impact. To presume that a religious conflict between progressives and conservatives played a central role in the conference, however, ignores the fact that, even in Pressburg, such conflicts were embryonic in 1825; outside of Pressburg, such conflicts were as yet non-existent. The fact that proponents of differing views gathered in Pressburg without fanfare suggests that boundaries between religious points of view had not yet hardened. Despite the differences regarding curriculum and teachers' qualifications, the two proposals that emerged from this conference agreed on a key point, namely, that each community be required to support at least one school where all children could receive a quality education. Although the participants could hardly have realized it at the time, the contention that individual communities assume responsibility for their own educational needs would eventually become the model for managing and improving education across ideological boundaries.²⁵

Two decades later, a second conference on Jewish education convened in Paks. Unlike the mixed group that had made up the Pressburg conference, almost all of the participants—73 out of 75—came from religiously conservative communities. With little or no disagreement over religious matters to distract them, this group hammered out a coherent set of guidelines for supervising Jewish education on a state-wide scale. These guidelines included provisions regulating the religious behavior of students and teachers and insuring total rabbinic control over school administration.²⁶

In the end, though, the Paks proposal had even less impact than the Pressburg proposal. From the relative insignificance of the Paks proposal, despite ideological unanimity, it is possible to draw three conclusions. First, the ability to undertake educational reform had little to do with affiliation to a particular religious outlook or the absence of religious differences. Second, although the support of the rabbinate after the fact was indispensable, their role in undertaking educational reforms was incidental. Finally, super-communal efforts to supervise education failed because such efforts simply could not take into account and sat-

isfy the particular and widely varying needs of individual communities. Just as these considerations explain the failure of the Pressburg and Paks programs, they explain the success of educational reform in Miskolc, particularly the program introduced by Abraham Hochmuth.

Hochmuth was born in 1816 in Baán, a rural town near the royal free city of Trencsén in Trencsén county. When he was a child, his parents realized that his “closet of a school was not the fertile ground on which they wanted their sons to grow.” In 1826, they sent Abraham and his brothers to study with their uncle, first in Nyitra and then in Ujhely. Hochmuth later recalled the limited character of his traditional upbringing and education:

My sense of Religion was awakened and nurtured by my uncle, under whose supervision I was from age 10 to 15. I owe my Talmudic and Biblical education to him. However, my geist was shaped by many other prejudices and deleterious influences, which I have tried for years to undo. Until I was 21, I lived without direction and guidance, left to myself with no pre-determined life goal in an unfulfilled state devoid of contemplation, which, even now, passes over me with horror. I had nothing in the way of maxims, principles, character, and morality. Following such empty years, I endeavored to reach a broader consciousness by clearing away all the debris that had involuntarily nested in my thoughts and representations. My Talmudic knowledge, and my very upbringing, was a product of the entire age.²⁷

Hochmuth came to Miskolc from Ujhely in 1832 to study with Abraham Wohl. In Miskolc, he encountered tension and conflict surrounding Abraham Wohl. He also benefited from the support and friendship of the Wahrmanns, a leading family who nurtured Hochmuth's own religious development:

Then, amid this grave threat, came two people who transported me from this perilous abyss to the threshold of the place where I now stand: Mr. Wahrmann and his wife. This couple raised me from the image of despair. My inner, moral self awoke with inspiring youthful vigor. I became warm, ardent for friendship and true human dignity, and I rediscovered my inner self, my forlorn God, and my belief in humanity.²⁸

By 1837, however, the limited intellectual climate of Miskolc no longer satisfied Hochmuth; he left to study in Prague, where, he later recalled, he was intellectually transformed:

My true, inner passage from this melancholy time manifested in my doubting pride of my heritage regarding God, immortality, and pre-destination. I felt compelled toward scientific and systematic knowledge. I desired a solid grounding, yet I knew nothing. Then Herr Schauer arrived in Prague as if descending from heaven, and guided me in the study of mathematics, which brought about a total revolution in my thinking. Much of my spiritual vigor, which had become rusty and decayed, was re-awakened; mysticism and fantasy, which, owing to my natural inclination toward fanaticism had always threatened to dominate me, were pressed back, and I started to think. In these ever-lasting memories, I emerged a man.²⁹

During his years of study of Prague, Hochmuth came under the influence of the Galician *Maskil* Shlomo Yehuda Rapoport and the work of educational psychologist Johann Herbart. By the time he returned to Miskolc, these influences had led Hochmuth to a conclusion regarding the events of the 1830s that would inform his entire attitude toward education. Because Wohl's main critics had been uneducated and religiously indifferent, Hochmuth regarded moral impropriety, religious laxity, and ignorance as inseparable problems, and he regarded a proper Jewish education as the solution to all three. At the same time, he regarded the emergence of religious orthodoxy in Pressburg with suspicion. Hochmuth identified a certain ironic similarity between religiously indifferent Jews and the adherents of Pressburg orthodoxy. Both, according to Hochmuth, had a superficial understanding of the true meaning of Judaism that was the product of ignorance. Improvements in education, he asserted, could eliminate both:

In no other period have Jewish youth had the benefit of so systematic a religious education as in our schools, and yet never have they had so narrow a religious feeling and proscribed Jewish spirit as in our generation... The uneducated masses and blinded fanatics remain fixed on superficial appearances, and shy away from the difficulty of grasping these things, or lack a deeper insight to grasp them. They maintain such absurd answers to these questions and ascribe such horrors and maladies to preachers and religious instructors, instead of blaming numerous misnomers that such points of view are actually disseminating.³⁰

Hochmuth's solution to this crisis of ignorance was built on two ideas: morality as an indispensable component of education, and the

belief that education be made accessible to everyone, including girls. He regarded his role as complimentary to Fischmann's religious guidance:

The religious instructor has the same fate as the modern synagogue minister. As we hear from time to time in the bathhouses, Judaism is more in decline than growing, growing weaker and not stronger, thus our youth, in imitation, cast away all religious vestments and, with high-minded enlightenment, abolish ceremonial law. It is due to these features that our ancestral religion has lasted so long, and that Judaism is not considered a misfortune. Thus this enigma demands earnest consideration regarding a solution, particularly by the Jewish Pedagogue, not merely for school but also for practice in life.³¹

Both the teacher and the rabbi, Hochmuth argued, could exert an impact on their respective audiences that reverberated far beyond the walls of the synagogue or the school. Both have the power and the responsibility to transform an individual entirely and to instill beliefs and values. Hochmuth believed that religious indifference resulted from a lack of awareness and that a properly educated individual would be drawn naturally to religious observance. He believed that, although ignorance and intolerance were inexorably linked, occasionally intolerance permeated even the ranks of those who were ostensibly well-educated. As Hochmuth recalled:

When the Miskolc school was established, a rabbi formerly from the area approached us with the intention of having his two sons visit and enroll them in the school. We greeted them with the greatest openness and gratification. When we mentioned eventually that in the highest class they would present a concise lesson in religion, this friendly man turned against the school, and he wanted nothing to do with the school altogether.³²

Because Hochmuth regarded ignorance as such a dangerous and divisive problem, he argued that the Jewish community had a responsibility to educate every Jewish child—girls as well as boys. Hochmuth traced the root of Jewish morality, in fact, to the “innermost circle of Jewish religious existence: family life.” He blamed the decline in morals on the fact that most girls and, hence, most women, received only a cursory education at best, and were exposed only to the authoritarian and dogmatic aspects of Judaism. Not only should girls receive the

same education as boys, Hochmuth claimed, but they should have same caliber of teachers or, ideally, the very same teachers.³³ Hochmuth advocated not only private education for affluent girls, but granting girls from rank and file families some of the same educational opportunities he extended to boys.

Acknowledging the centrality of mothers in preserving Jewish tradition and passing it along to the next generation, Hochmuth disparaged their poor education: "Uneducated girls and women, no less than uneducated boys and men, threaten the stability of the Jewish community by cultivating a popular audience that is overly vulnerable to extreme and narrow beliefs." For Hochmuth, narrow-mindedness and ignorance were inexorably linked to indifference:

In the past, girls, too, received education only in the home. Whatever girls acquired in the field of education was within the walls of the home—primarily motivated by religion. Conditions have changed; girls must be on the same level as boys. Schools must be established to meet this requirement, and because the home has shifted its responsibility toward religion to the school, girls, too, must receive an education in the Jewish school.³⁴

This concern was aggravated by the fact that most of the domestic servants had immigrated from what he regarded as the culturally unenlightened "Polish" counties to the northeast—Abaúj, Zemplén, and Sáros—breeding grounds for religious fanaticism and antiquarianism.³⁵

Under Hochmuth's guidance, the Kehilla advocated an expanded curriculum for girls that, while still falling short of the religious education for boys, would greatly improve girls' education. Hochmuth and his supporters were not starting from scratch. Often girls and boys began their religious education together, particularly in affluent *Miskolc* families that employed private tutors. In his semi-autobiographical portrayal of the Bondy family, for example, Lajos Hatvany-Deutsch described how the sons and daughters studied together until the age of ten, after which the boys continued in a *Yeshiva* and the girls began preparing for marriage.³⁶

As a way of extending this shared learning environment to a wider stratum of students, Hochmuth advocated a more balanced curriculum for boys and girls that combined secular subjects necessary to combat immorality with religious subjects to stem the tide of indiffer-

ence. In the end, he recognized that the simplest way of meeting this goal would be to give girls and boys the same curriculum, except for those subjects deemed too masculine for girls or too feminine for boys. Hochmuth's stratagem was put into effect in Miskolc by the end of the 1840s. It is noteworthy that Hochmuth's education program provided girls with a more balanced distribution of secular and religious subjects than that of the more religiously progressive Leopold Löw. Löw delineated a curriculum of religious subjects for boys and then stated: "With regard to religious instruction, girls will omit translating biblical text and typical prayers from the Hebrew original and Jewish History. They will learn popular beliefs and morals, the fundamentals of Hebrew grammar."³⁷

Table IX: Domestic Servants by Year of Arrival: 1842–1848

Year	Number*
Pre-1842	6
1842	3
1843	4
1844	11
1845	12
1846	15
1847	22
1848	12
1842–1848	79

* These numbers should be seen as minimum amounts since the year of arrival in Miskolc was not recorded for 67 domestic servants.

Source: *Conscriptio Judaeorum* (Miskolc, 1848)

The Contrast between Hochmut and Löw is equally illuminating with respect to language instruction. Both advocated that Jews learn German and Magyar, because as Hochmut suggested, "German is the language of culture and Hungarian is the language of the state and the street."³⁸ Löw, however, emphasized German as the primary vernacular language to be taught, and Magyar as the secondary language. Hochmuth recognized that it was unrealistic to expect every Jewish child to learn two languages, in addition to Hebrew, and made Hungarian the language of instruction in the Miskolc schools. He encouraged

students to learn German on their own and offered it as a voluntary course.³⁹ This point of view placed Hochmuth on the cutting edge of national and educational reform. During the 1840s, as is discussed in the next chapter, Hungarian still lagged behind German and French as a fully developed literary language. After 1848, Hochmuth's point of view would be touted by virtually all proponents of Hungarian nationalism.

Pinchas Heilprin's critique of religious extremism

In general, Hochmuth sought a useful balance between Judaism and the demands of the outside world, and regarded the new Talmud Torah, the Lehrschul, and the Lehranstalt as the means to accomplish his goal. Although he regarded his schools, first and foremost, as institutions of Jewish education whose curriculum revolved around the study of the Talmud, he viewed the study of Hungarian as only slightly less important. Hochmuth's reforms found broad support in Miskolc, particularly among the more influential families. Their support and Fischmann's assured the success of Hochmuth's educational program. His reforms were indicative of an increasingly prevalent atmosphere that eschewed religious friction. This outlook needed no ideological justification, but found it in the work of Pinchas Heilprin.

Heilprin, an immigrant from Galicia, had already established a reputation in the Galician Haskalah prior to his arrival in Miskolc in 1842. His ideological expression was exceptional for Miskolc, but nonetheless indicative of the religious middle class taking shape in Miskolc. His at times convoluted views of Judaism and Jewish life exemplified not only the eclectic character of Haskalah in Galicia, but the hybrid character of Jewish life in Miskolc. Heilprin combined a desire to pare away the particularistic aspects of Jewish life with a concern for preserving the integrity of Judaism and the Jewish community.⁴⁰

Heilprin's views bring into sharper focus the disparate religious outlooks of Hungarian Jews.⁴¹ Consider, for example, the difference between Heilprin's views and Leopold Löw's, the rabbi of the newly

established Reform congregation of Szeged, who addressed some of the same issues.⁴² Löw generally regarded Reform Judaism as an indispensable means of proving Jews worthy of emancipation, and deemed Pressburg's reactionary outlook as a major obstacle not only to emancipation but to civic improvement of any kind:

Pressburg rabbis have been trying for some time to hinder the emancipation of Hungarian Jews. Do they not know that they preserve religion in name only? Is this what we have in mind, to eradicate Judaism with only fossilized souls and a decaying spirit remaining? While all European religious zealots are striving toward civic equality, the obscurantism of several individuals in Pressburg is endangering all of us by working against the voice of civilization.⁴³

Heilprin shared Löw's disdain for the Pressburg rabbinate, whom he regarded as destructive to Hungarian Jewish culture:

Those who preach and teach before they even open their eyes to the 'culture of evil' ultimately distort the words of God and his Torah. These men are no different than Holdheim, for they mislead and confuse; and they preserve and build a wall of fire and steel and wood around the Torah, and anyone who draws near to the Torah with the hope of understanding the word of God, they accuse this person of defiling the Torah.⁴⁴

While Heilprin agreed with Löw that the intransigence of the Pressburg rabbis threatened to undermine the civic future of Hungarian Jewry and that certain reforms in Judaism were necessary, Heilprin believed that Reform Judaism had gone too far. Heilprin presented his critique of Reform Judaism in the form of thirteen letters that attacked the ideology and character of Samuel Holdheim, one of the more radical figures of the Reform Movement in Germany.⁴⁵ Heilprin wrote this polemic in response to the innovations that Holdheim had proposed at the Conferences convened by Reform rabbis in 1844 and 1845. Written in the circuitous and rambling style of the *Haskalah*, Heilprin cited the ideas of Moses Mendelssohn and defended them against Reform Judaism with a mountain of biblical and rabbinic citations.⁴⁶

Heilprin was especially critical of Holdheim on three issues: the language of the Jews, education, and the role of the rabbinate. He regarded Holdheim's wholesale rejection of Hebrew as a Jewish lan-

guage as a threat to Jewish survival. Heilprin agreed with Holdheim that Jews must learn to speak the vernacular fluently, but maintained that Hebrew was also important: "I come to warn all those who plunge into the depths of Greek, German, Latin and French for they risk cutting themselves off from the language and culture of their people."⁴⁷

With regard to education, Heilprin agreed with those who advocated a dual curriculum of Jewish and secular subjects for Jewish children, but only if these children were properly guided by teachers who believed in the sanctity of Judaism. In fact, Heilprin advocated an education system similar to the one Naftali Herz Wessely had outlined sixty years earlier:

First bring a child to school at the age of five, teach him immediately to read and write German, French, Italian or English and Greek and Latin. Then they teach the children the works of Homer, Virgil and the like, then mathematics and science and geography. Only when the child grows up does he begin slowly to study the Torah and Jewish philosophy.⁴⁸

Under the tutelage of teachers such as Holdheim, Heilprin asserted, exposure to secular subjects at an early age had disastrous consequences for Jewish children in Germany, leading to rampant assimilation and intermarriage. This, Heilprin argued, was particularly damaging because Holdheim and others like him held the title of rabbi, thus their words carried much weight. The subversion of the rabbinate, Heilprin claimed, was the most destructive act of Holdheim and other radical reformers:

Who could possibly believe such things could happen! These upstarts have taken over the rabbinate in Germany. They add and detract wantonly to the laws of the Torah, preach from meaningless books; they lump the entirety of Torah into a single convoluted mixture of heresy and lies; they cast off their prayer shawls and claim to do so in the name of purity; they claim that medieval Jewish scholars endorsed such actions; they look down upon us like so much cattle. Woe is thee Mecklenburg! Your rabbi is an empty young ignoramus, void of Torah, void of wisdom, void of fear of heaven, void of manners, void of every desirable quality but full of arrogance and deception.⁴⁹

Heilprin did not disagree entirely with Holdheim. Heilprin agreed, for example, that it was no longer possible for Jews to live exclusively under Jewish law given the pending emancipation. Nonetheless, Heilprin rejected Holdheim's claim that Jewish law had lost all of its value. Heilprin argued that Jews should find a balance between observing religious laws and abiding by the laws of the state: "Holdheim is not the first to distinguish between laws of faith given only Israel and the laws of the state that hinge on a mere temporal authority...but he is the first to ignore the value of faith in the face of the state."⁵⁰ Only by combining the best elements of rabbinic tradition and *Haskalah*, Heilprin argued, could Jews perpetuate their culture in an age of tumultuous change. Heilprin regarded education and the rabbinate as the keys to survival.

Heilprin's ideas embodied in ideological terms the religious outlook of Miskolc Jews, whose combination of traditional and progressive beliefs identified neither with Orthodoxy nor Reform until the end of the 1870s, when they grudgingly made this choice. One might argue that Heilprin's selective antipathy toward Reform and Orthodoxy anticipated the emergence of the alternative Jewish movement that appeared at the end of the 1860s: the Status Quo Movement.⁵¹

By the end of the 1840s, Hochmuth and the new schools he headed were pillars of Jewish communal life. When the community completed construction of a new hospital in October of 1847, for example, Hochmuth delivered one of the keynote speeches at the dedication. He expressed his delight at the success of "the flourishing teacher institute" and hoped that it would "set in motion a desire for all sorts of communal improvements, and spur other teachers toward further achievements and enthusiasm."⁵²

For the moment, Hochmuth's educational reforms had little impact beyond Miskolc. Within a decade, the same conditions that assisted him in Miskolc in the 1840s would facilitate his efforts to implement these changes on a state-wide level during the 1850s. In Miskolc, his program was made possible by the financial backing of Wolf Brody's will and by Moses Fischmann's rabbinic approval. A decade later, he would find similar assistance from a National Education Fund that would allot over a million forints for Jewish educational reforms, and from a Hungarian rabbinate willing to endorse

such innovations. In this sense, Hochmuth personified the posthumous success of Wolf Brody in reforming Jewish education, thus completing communal efforts to balance religious needs with the expectations of local government. By erecting an educational system that molded Jews into citizens while providing a solid traditional education, Brody created a Jewish community capable of incorporating the demands of citizenship into a traditional Jewish lifestyle.

Hochmuth's dual emphasis on reinforcing both Jewish identity and state service could not have been more timely. The growing complexity of Hungarian politics during the 1840s forced the Kehilla to reconsider its political strategy in dealing with local government, and demanded that Jews confront the tensions between their Jewishness and their connection to Magyar nationhood and culture. The balance that Hochmuth, like Brody before him, labored to inculcate in his students would face its ultimate test during the 1840s in the question: *magyar-észidó vagy észidó-magyar*, Hungarian-Jew or Jewish Hungarian?

The Hochmuth educational program, moreover, reflected two trends in Miskolc that would be crucial during the charged religious conflicts of the 1860s: first, ideology would play a comparatively minor role in religious decision-making in Miskolc, as leading Jewish families, the rabbinate, and intellectuals like Hochmuth and Heilprin shared an aversion for religious extremism of any kind. Second, super-communal initiatives would have little affect on religious life, as the success of Hochmuth, in contrast to the failed efforts at Paks, indicated that communal problems were best handled locally and not on a state-wide level.

More broadly, the Hochmuth reforms reflected a shift in Jewish identity that steadily had gained ground across Europe during the first half of the nineteenth century. Since the time of Moses Mendelssohn, traditional Jewish thinkers distinguished between changes in Judaism and Jewish life, accommodating the latter much more than the former. By steering clear, for the most part, of religious polemic, and concentrating instead on more pragmatic ways to improve the quality of Jewish life, Hochmuth avoided the resistance that undermined educational reforms elsewhere. The success of Hochmuth's reforms, moreover, revealed the emerging gap between religious and non-religious aspects of Jewish life. This growing compartmentalization

and desacralization of Jewish life, embodied in the smooth transition to a dual religious and secular education, meant that Jewish law alone would no longer delineate the parameters of Jewish life, but would compete with practical, non-religious considerations. Such considerations were important in the innovations of Jewish education during the 1840s.

Notes

- 1 Abraham Hochmuth, *Emlékezősek* [Recollections] (Veszprém, 1886), p. 24.
- 2 *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*, vol.6, no.30, 1842, p. 443.
- 3 *Ibid.*, pp. 443–444.
- 4 On critiques of education see Mordechai Eliav, *Jewish Education in Germany in the Period of Enlightenment and Emancipation* (Hebrew, hereinafter Eliav, *Jewish Education in Germany*) (Jerusalem, 1971); and, more recently, Shmuel Feiner, “Educational Programs and Social Ideals: The ‘Freischul’ in Berlin, 1778–1828” (Hebrew) in *Zion LX* (1995): 401–424; Jay Berkowitz, *The Shaping of Jewish Identity in Nineteenth Century France* (Detroit, 1989) especially pp. 150–191; for Russia, see Shaul Stampfer, *Ha-Yeshiva ha-Lita'it be-Hithavuta* [The Lithuanian Yeshiva] (Jerusalem, 1995); and Mordechai Zalkin, “Trends in the Development of Maskilic Education in the Russian Empire during the Nineteenth Century,” (Hebrew) in *Zion LXII* (1997) pp. 133–171.
- 5 Jewish communities generally ran two primary schools, the *Heder* and the *Talmud Torah*. Both were traditional schools where Jewish boys aged 3–12 studied rudimentary Biblical texts with rabbinic commentary by rote. Children who attended the Heder paid a fee either to the Kehilla or to the instructor. The Talmud Torah provided education free of charge, and in many communities became a school primarily for orphans and poor children. Consequently, the quality of education in the Talmud Torah often lagged behind the Heder.
- 6 Rabbi Elijah of Vilna, for example, insisted that his students learn Hebrew grammar and mathematics in order to understand certain sections of the Talmud. See Stampfer, *The Lithuanian Yeshiva*, p. 20. On traditional Ashkenazic attitudes toward secular learning see David Ruderman, *Jewish Thought and Scientific Discovery in Early Modern Europe* (New Haven, 1995), pp. 7–8. It is generally agreed that, prior to the 1830s, impulses to expand Jewish education in the Russian were isolated and idiosyncratic. More recently, David Fishman argued that it was more coordinated. David E. Fishman, *Russia's First Modern Jews: The Jews of Shklov* (New York and London, 1995), pp. 5–6.
- 7 See, for example, Shmuel Feiner, “Educational Programs and Social Ideals: The ‘Freischul’ in Berlin, 1778–1828” (Hebrew) *Zion LX* (1995) pp. 424–425.

- 8 *Protokol be-Hadash*, p. 37:a #11 (March 1824).
- 9 *Protocolle* p. 227b #3 (May 3, 1835).
- 10 *Születési, házassági és meghalotti* (sic) *anyakönyv* [Birth, Marriage and Death Registry]. Miskolc. 1833–1851; *Conscriptio Judaeorum* (Miskolc, 1848).
- 11 *Protokol be-Hadash* p. 89:a #16 (April 1837).
- 12 *Protokol be-Hadash*, p. 97:b-98:a #10 (February, 1837).
- 13 *Protocolle*, p.433:b #20 (May 12, 1844)
- 14 Brody's will spans four pages in the communal record. See *Protocolle*, 353:a-355:b. 46,900 forints was equivalent to 25,000 American dollars, which was an enormous amount of money in 1841, particularly for a small town in a backward country. Since the sum was given in hard currency and not paper Wiener Wending, it would not decrease in value with inflation. For a detailed discussion of currency in the Habsburg Empire, and an attempt to weigh the relative values of various currencies, see Monika Schmidl, "Überblick über die Österreichische Münz- und Warungsgeschichte," (Offprint: Vienna, 1985) pp. 1–26.
- 15 The *Lehrschul* would eventually become a school for orphans although Brody intended it as a free school for all children. The *Lehranstalt* would become a teacher training institute.
- 16 *Protocolle*, p. 389:a-b. #16-17 (April 17, 1842). The contract with Onod is on 390:a #23.
- 17 The commission report is on p. 390:b #30. (April 24, 1842).
- 18 *Protocolle*, p. 396:a #72 (June 16, 1842). The promotion of the head of school to quasi-officer anticipated a situation a decade later when the head of school became the defacto head of the Jewish community, as is discussed in chapter 9.
- 19 *Ibid.*, p. 391:a #32 (May 1, 1842).
- 20 The entire list of proposals begins on *Protocolle* p. 390:b #30 (April 24, 1842).
- 21 *Protocolle* p. 392:b #46 (May 8, 1842).
- 22 *Protocolle* 393:a #50-51 (May 26, 1842).
- 23 For biographical information on Abraham Hochmuth, I am relying on Mór Klein, "Abraham Hochmuth." Hochmuth is best known for his treatise, *Die Jüdische Schul in Ungarn, wie sie ist, und wie sie sein soll*, (Miskolc, 1851).
- 24 Aron Moskovitz, *Jewish Education in Hungary*. (New York, 1964) p. 11.
- 25 Michael Silber, in analyzing the conflict in Pressburg between Maskilim and traditionalists, showed that intra-communal tension appeared only after the communal elections of 1827. Silber, *Roots of the Schism*, p. 25.
- 26 Moskowitz, *Jewish Education*, p. 12.
- 27 Hochmuth, *Emlékezősek*, p. 3.
- 28 *Ibid.*, p. 8.
- 29 *Ibid.*, p. 9.
- 30 Hochmuth, *Die Jüdische Schul*, pp. 52–53.
- 31 *Ibid.*, p. 123.
- 32 *Ibid.*, p. 125.

- 33 Hochmuth devotes an entire section of his book to girls' education. See *ibid.*, pp. 166–172.
- 34 Hochmuth, *Die Judische Schul*, pp. 142–143.
- 35 Hochmuth, *Die Judische Schul*, pp. 137–138. In retrospect, Hochmuth's concern regarding the influx of Jews from these counties was validated as their presence in dozens of households helped create a popular base for religious fanaticism during the 1860s, as is discussed below in Chapter 9.
- 36 Lajos Hatvany-Deutsch, *Urak és Emberek* vol 1, p. 16. Hatvany-Deutsch goes on to describe how one of the girls, dissatisfied with the limited possibilities that awaited her in Miskolc, ran off with a Habsburg officer and was never heard from again.
- 37 Leopold Löw, *Der judische Kongress in Ungarn, historisch beleuchtet* (Pest, 1871) p. 261.
- 38 *Ibid.*, p. 54.
- 39 Hochmuth's attitude toward the German and Hungarian languages are in *ibid.*, pp. 52–55.
- 40 The only extant biographical information on Pinchas Heilprin is found in the introductory pages of a short biography of his son Mihály Heilprin that Abraham Hochmuth published in 1888. Hochmuth evidently published this short essay more as hagiography than history; he hailed Pinchas Heilprin as one of the three shining stars of the Hebrew Renaissance in Galicia, the other two being Shlomo Yehuda Rapoport and Nachman Krochmal. See Abraham Hochmuth, "Heilprin Mihály" in *Magyar Zsidó Szemle V* (Budapest, 1888) pp. 560–569 and especially pp. 560–562.
- 41 On Heilprin's religious outlook, see Howard Lupovitch "Between Orthodoxy and Neolog Judaism: The Origins of the Status Quo Movement," *Jewish Social Studies* 9/2 (2003) pp. 130–133.
- 42 Löw expressed his views in the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*, in a series of essays that appeared between 1837 and 1842. Heilprin delineated his views most clearly in a treatise entitled *T'shuvot l'Anshei Aven* (Responses to Men of Iniquity) that he published in 1845. Szeged, a royal free city where Jews were allowed to settle only after 1839, emerged during the 1840s as an important center of Reform Judaism and the campaign for emancipation.
- 43 Leopold Löw, "Die Anti-emanzipationsversuche des Pressburg Rabbinats," in *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums V*, (1841) p. 206.
- 44 Heilprin, *T'shuvot be-Anshei Aven*, pp. 57–58.
- 45 Michael Meyer, "'Most of My Brethren Find Me Unacceptable': The Controversial Career of Rabbi Samuel Holdheim" *Jewish Social Studies* 9/3 (2003) p. 3.
- 46 For a recent analysis of Holdheim, see Michael Meyer, "'Most of My Brethren Find me Unacceptable': The Controversial Career of Rabbi Samuel Holdheim," *Jewish Social Studies* 9/3 (2003), p. 1–19. It was not unusual for more moderate proponents of the Galician Haskalah to attack advocates of Reform Judaism. Some of the most vicious attacks on Reform came from moderate Maskillim.

47 Heilprin, *Teshuvot*, p. 52.

48 Ibid., p. 35.

49 Ibid., p. 41.

50 Ibid., p. 26.

51 Status Quo Ante was a movement that appeared within Hungarian Jewry as a response to the Congress of 1868, and is discussed in Chapter 9 below.

52 *Der Orient* no. 47, 12 October, 1847.

*Széchenyi's Soup at Szemere's Table:
Miskolc Jewry and the Era of Reform,
1836–1848*

An often overlooked aspect of the path to Jewish emancipation in Hungary is the fact that the architects of the two edicts of emancipation—László Palóczy and Bertalan Szemere in 1849, and Baron Joseph Eötvös in 1867—lived in Miskolc while they formulated their view of Jewish emancipation. This was more than mere coincidence. By the mid 1830s and increasingly thereafter, conditions in Miskolc vitiated much of Palóczy's, Eötvös', and Szemere's concern regarding the potential danger of Jewish emancipation.

This concern, the focal point in the debate over Jewish emancipation in Hungary, was expressed poignantly in 1844 by István Széchenyi, the father of Hungarian national reform, in a speech he delivered to the National Assembly: "Our situation is not simple like, for example, that of the English. The English nation could liberate the Jewish race because if I were to spill a bottle of ink into a large lake, its waters will not be ruined by it... But if someone spills a bottle of ink into the Hungarian soup, the soup will be ruined and not fit for human consumption."¹ Széchenyi, in other words, feared the consequences of absorbing thousands of Jews not only because of the seemingly insurmountable challenge of transforming un-enlightened, caftan clad, Yiddish-speaking tavern keepers from Galicia into productive citizens and true Magyars; but also because, unlike his veneration for the well-developed English polity, economy, and culture, he doubted whether Hungarian society could withstand such an undertaking. Whether or not Jews could be assimilated into the mainstream,

in other words, depended not only on the willingness of Jews but also on the strength of Magyar nationalism itself.

In this regard, the pioneering endorsements of Jewish emancipation put forth by Palóczy, Eötvös, and Szemere offer a useful corollary to Széchenyi's paradigmatic link between the strength of Magyar nationalism and the foreignness of Hungarian Jews. From the late 1820s on, Miskolc was the cutting edge of the Magyar cultural and linguistic revival. From this vantage point, Palóczy, Szemere, and Eötvös deemed Magyar nationalism less vulnerable to being undermined by the assimilation of an emancipated Jewry or other non-Magyar group. By 1848, moreover, the question of Jewish emancipation did not appear that radical and menacing to Palóczy, Eötvös, and Szemere; Jews in Miskolc had, for the most part, demonstrated their patriotism and commitment to civic responsibility. They had adopted Magyar as a language of communal administration and commerce, delivered an annual quota of recruits since 1840, curtailed Jewish immigration from Galicia, and created an administrative framework that maintained order and unity and that participated in county responses to crisis situations.

When Eötvös, Palóczy, and Szemere publicly endorsed Jewish emancipation for the first time—Eötvös in 1840, in a seminal essay on Jewish emancipation, Szemere in an address to the National Assembly in the Spring of 1848, and Palóczy as the co-author with Szemere of the 1849 Emancipation Edict—they were describing a *fait accompli* with respect to their hometown constituency. For Miskolc Jewry, the emancipation edicts were two of a series of legislative acts that acknowledged existing developments rather than bringing them about: county recognition of the Jewish Artisans Guild in 1836; the National Diet's Law 29 of 1840, and an 1872 Borsod County law that removed any remaining formal differences between Jewish artisans and industrialists and their non-Jewish counterparts.

The impact of Law 29 of 1840 is especially indicative. While there is no question that the legal reforms contained in this law introduced major changes for much of Hungarian Jewry, the law had little effect on Jews in Miskolc, for whom it merely rubber-stamped a situation that had largely come into being. Rather, 1840 was significant for Miskolc Jewry in three other, less apparent ways: the establishment of a

county-Kehilla dominated by the Jewish elite of Miskolc, the shift from Yiddish-Deutsch to Magyar as the language of the communal protocols, and the beginning of Borsod County Jews serving in the Habsburg army.

Palóczy, Szemere, and Eötvös, moreover, did not regard emancipation as a drastic change for Hungarian Jews, thus they saw no need for radical reforms of Judaism. Miskolc Jews, having obtained virtually equal status, had demonstrated willingness and ability to embrace Magyar nationalism without undertaking such internal reforms. As a result, Palóczy, Szemere, and Eötvös articulated a notion of religious reform that emphasized improvements in the framework of Jewish communal administration more than the innovations in the beliefs and practices of Judaism.

The Jew as Magyar: Eötvös' romantic appraisal

That Szemere's and Eötvös' political and social outlook gestated and matured in Borsod County has long since been acknowledged by Hungarian historians:

At that time two highly capable young men lived on rural estates in Borsod County, who attracted the attention of the public not only in their own country but in large measure from abroad as well. Both were known as high-spirited and eminently capable and courageous pioneers of liberal ideas. The two men were Bertalan Szemere and József Eötvös, who prepared in quiet seclusion for the great struggle they would later take up in the interest of progress, enlightenment, and the revival of our country.²

Palóczy's role as the leader of the Borsod County liberal opposition and, in general, a leading voice in county politics was inherent in his nickname, the "Grey-haired Warrior of Borsod" (*Borsodi ősz bajnok*).³ He made no secret of his devotion to Miskolc, his hometown. In 1831, while living briefly in Pest, he wrote that "it is indeed lovely to live in Pest, glorious with its camaraderie and amenities, but, in the entire world, there is only one Miskolc." In 1832, he became the Borsod County correspondent for Kossuth's *Törvényhatósági Tudósítás*, a weekly publication devoted primarily to defending and exercising free

speech in the face of Habsburg censorship. In tandem, Palóczy and Szemere were perhaps the most prominent figures in county politics from the 1830s through the 1860s. Palóczy represented Borsod County in the National Assembly during the latter's 1832–36, 1839–40, and 1843–44 session. Szemere was instrumental in founding the Borsod Reading Circle in March 1842, and was elected the deputy-sheriff of Borsod County in 1846. He represented Borsod at the 1843–44 and 1847–48 session, and was a leader of the revolutionary government in 1848–49, serving first as Interior Minister under Lajos Kossuth and then as Prime Minister. After 1849, Szemere lived in exile as an emigré in Paris. Palóczy remained a prominent figure in Borsod virtually until his death in 1861. In 1860, he was appointed the first president of the Borsod County Diet after the diet had been closed for a decade under Habsburg neo-absolutist rule.⁴

While a native of Buda, Eötvös had settled on his family's Borsod County estate in 1837 upon returning from his travels abroad. Soon after, he was appointed to the county magistracy and spent most of his time in Miskolc, appearing regularly at the county assembly, and working with county sheriff Miklós Vay on ways to improve the county prison system. Midway through the five years that he lived in Borsod County, he published his seminal essay on Jewish emancipation that later became the blueprint for the Emancipation Edict of 1867.⁵ The presence of Palóczy, Szemere, and Eötvös in Miskolc during the 1830s rooted the much of the city's character and notoriety in the larger political and cultural world of Borsod County, as István Dobrossy noted:

When people spoke of Miskolc during the 1830s and 1840s as liberal, scholarly, and the hub of cultural revival, they spoke not of Miskolc the city, but of Miskolc the county seat. More specifically, Miskolc owed its reputation particularly as a focal point of reform to the fact that a cadre of elite nobles active in county politics lived there...Miskolc was portrayed a certain way before the national public because of Borsod County.⁶

At the same time, the attitudes of the three reformers toward emancipation and nationalism were elements of a larger enterprise by liberal nobles to remake Hungarian society in their own image, succinctly summarized by Ambrus Miskolczy:

The ideologues of the Hungarian liberal movement envisioned the creation of a civic nation through the extension of rights... They did not want to eradicate the nobility like the racists of the French Revolution... They did not promote making nobles out of peasants but elevating the peasantry to the 'ramparts of the constitution,' by granting them civil rights. The first great act of assimilating by extending rights: liberation of the peasantry; the final act: Jewish emancipation."⁷

At the heart of this twinned effort to emancipate and assimilate the Jews was, in the words of Nathaniel Katzburg, "not only an attempt to recognize rights, but a recognition of the man within the Jew."⁸

This was an arduous task, even for the most ardent proponents of Jewish emancipation. For Eötvös, revaluing Jews as Magyars stemmed from his idealistic and romantic views of Hungarian Jewry and the Magyar nation. During the 1840s, he joined with other liberals in the nobility's efforts toward spreading the use of the Magyar language. He himself had mastered the language only with limited success and with great difficulty. In 1831, after struggling to master the Magyar language for eight years, he conceded the slow pace of Magyarization: "If you find fault with my Hungary, ascribe them to circumstances and not to sloth. Foreign sounds ring in our ears, our mother tongue, that which even an impoverished mother bequeaths to her children, is German."⁹ Despite his limited personal success, though, he did not doubt the vitality of the Magyar nation, which he regarded as impervious to any imagined threat Jews might pose, emancipated or otherwise:

Is it possible for someone to be so pessimistic to believe that a nation, which settled these borders from Central Asia amidst the storms of history, surrounded by adversaries from the moment it arrived, which struggled for a millennium against attacks, nonetheless survived a century and a half of occupation and three centuries of German alliance—that such a nation would be endangered by the emancipation of a few thousand Jews?¹⁰

His attitude toward Jewish emancipation reflected a similar romantic idealism. He lauded the nobleness of Jews, despite their outward appearance to the contrary:

There is one side of the Jewish character that is often unpleasant, repulsive and even ridiculous. But there is another side which, no matter with how

much prejudice and bias we regard this people, compels us to respect them: their tradition. It is perhaps possible to despise the Jew whom we see only in his relationship with Christians. But the same heartless miser is a good father and husband, and a friend of religious belief...There are none among the followers of Moses who would not have compassion on his own kinfolk.¹¹

Typical of liberal romantics since the end of the eighteenth century, Eötvös attributed the deplorable condition of Hungarian Jewry to the hostility that Jews endured in an unenlightened Christian world:

If we could look into the recesses of his heart, if we could know his thoughts, if we could guess from them the feelings that pulsate in his tortured heart, perhaps then we would be forced to honor him, he whom we have coldly mocked. Perhaps he is thinking about his children or their bellies hungry for bread far from him in the darkest streets of the city, for whom he is their only hope?...Or perhaps his heart is filled with more noble desires. Perhaps a love for his country can burn in his heart, perhaps he, too, wishes to live for humanity.¹²

Eötvös, though, was keenly attuned to the particular situation in Hungary; he singularly rooted the condition of Hungarian Jews to the corruption rampant among Hungarian noblemen. In *The Village Notary* Eötvös described the machinations of a corrupt noblewoman ruining the life of an innocent man for personal gain with the help of a wretched, despised Jewish accomplice, Jancsi the Glazier. Jancsi is the embodiment of seemingly every negative stereotype about Hungarian Jews. He is beggarly, dishonest, cold, merciless, scheming, ruthless, profit-minded, disfigured, and ugly. Eventually his devilish deeds are exposed, and he is imprisoned amid the triumph of good over evil.

In the end, however, the author exonerates the Jew. The story winds up with the Jew convicted and imprisoned for his crime, linking the deplorable condition of the Jew and the prison where he is condemned to die. Although he leaves no doubt as to the Jew's wretchedness, Eötvös distinguished between the Jew's ultimate sense of justice and the noblewoman's total disdain for the plight of others, thereby exonerating the Jew as a pawn dragged down by a noblewoman's machinations:

He was a Jew; that one word tells his whole history. Born to share in the distress of his family, brought up to suffer from the injustice of the masses, cast

loose upon the world, not to be free but abandoned; struggling for his daily bread, not by honest labor, for that is forbidden to a Jew, but by trickery and cunning; crawling on the earth like a worm which any body may tread upon and crush; hated, hunted, persecuted, scouted; such was his past. Such are the sufferings common to the Jews in Hungary.¹³

That Eötvös chose a prison as the place for Jancsi's confession reflected a similarity between the author's view of Jews and prison. After conducting an extensive investigation of the Borsod County Prison system, Eötvös concluded that the immorality of convicts, like the wretchedness of Jews, is not the fault of the individual in question, but a product of a corrupt social and political hierarchy. With regard to prisons, he suggested that transforming prisons into more civilized institutions would help inmates become more productive individuals when they re-entered the mainstream of society:

Our Institutions are in large part the product of the Middle Ages, which continue to afflict us to this day and threaten to afflict us in the coming centuries as well...As we investigate our prisons we recognize that the evil air inside these walls exists elsewhere as well. It is a known principle that whomever the law convicts for a short time, the poor air and loneliness of prison life will surely destroy.¹⁴

The civic amelioration of Jews and prisoners alike, therefore, required the elimination of corruption.

The Jews as Magyar: Palóczy's and Szemere's pragmatic approach

Palóczy and Szemere, while sharing some of Eötvös' romantic idealism, approached the questions of emancipation and Magyar nationalism far more pragmatically. For Palóczy, advocating on behalf of Jews was part of a larger advocacy on behalf of disadvantaged groups. In October 1835, for example, he spoke out against the taxation of impoverished nobles. He was especially outraged by the fact that these nobles had no political voice: "Miskolc has 1,300 nobles who have no representation, and the voices of 9,354 nobles (i.e. the number of im-

poverished nobles in Borsod County) cannot be interpreted by a few landlords.”¹⁵

Szemere, too, mixed pragmatism with a romantic idealism. He celebrated the multi-national, multi-ethnic character of Hungary, and regarded the Magyars as the leader in a diverse community of nations fighting for a common cause: “I imagine Hungary as its peoples assembled around a large banquet table. Spread out on the table are the nations’ property, life, peace, freedom, honor, glory, fortune, hope for the future, and blessing for the rest. All the peoples of Hungary are at the table and guard it to the last drop of blood, to the death.” And he regarded Jews as a deserving though as yet not fully welcomed part of this community:

Off to the side, however, stands one nation, which rises in defense of the treasure-laden table; although it has no freedom on the table, no honor, no rights among those rights whose defense it takes part in...it sheds as much blood as the other peoples. This people is the Jewish people!¹⁶

Like Eötvös, moreover, Szemere attributed the character of Jews to external conditions, differentiating the commercial habits of Jews from their moral character:

There is no doubt that the Jewish religion and the Jewish way of life has many blemishes, problems and flaws because nearly two thousand years of servitude cultivated the soil for iniquity and unworthiness. But there is also no doubt that, although the religion of Moses was evil in its construction, it still contains much good. In the absence of freedom, its devolved to evil and its good nature diminished...¹⁷

Szemere’s appraisal, though, was rooted in a pragmatic and utilitarian outlook that was the result of his Miskolc roots and his direct contacts with Miskolc Jewry. His relationship with Jews was in no small part of an institutional relationship between the County Diet and County-Kehilla. As the Borsod County representative to the National Diet from 1838 on and an outspoken advocate of emancipation, his services to Hungarian Jews were duly noted annually by the Jews of Miskolc, along with the services of his mentor and fellow delegate László Palóczy:

We must consider our obligation to László Pálóczy and Bertalan Szemere, who have debated the affairs of the Jews with such helpful disposition, and next month arrive home. We must honor them with an appropriate gift, thus it is hereby decided that we shall present each with 130 pieces of silver. This honorarium will be in the name of the county and Miskolc.¹⁸

Indeed, his relationship with Miskolc Jewry marked a turning point in noble-Jewish relations in Borsod County. By the 1840s, Miskolc Jewry regarded as its protectors not only prosperous magnates but also liberal nobles in general:

Bearing in mind that on the occasion of the most recent national assembly that Borsod County second deputy sheriff and representative to parliament László Pálóczy worked hard for the improvement of the lot of Israelites, and that we owe him gratitude, it is decided to purchase for him a present, something of value made either of gold or of silver worth 50 pengő forints, and have the council present it to him with thanks.¹⁹

Szemere's confidence with respect to Magyar nationalism, no less than his attitude toward emancipation, stemmed from the fact that, in and around Miskolc, the Magyar language and culture had been an integral part of the school curriculum since the beginning of the nineteenth century. The beginning of Magyar cultural in Miskolc dates back to a statement made covertly by Ferenc Kazinczy, a central figure in the Magyar cultural revival, during the reign of Joseph II.

As superintendent of schools in Northeastern Hungary on behalf of the Habsburg government, Kazinczy publicly advocated replacing Latin with German as the language of education and administration. In the secretive setting of the Miskolc Freemason lodge, though, Kazinczy advocated Magyar as the preferred language. This lodge, founded in 1781 by a coterie of liberals including Kazinczy, József Szatmáry Király, and József Vay, was the forum in which Kazinczy first articulated an affinity for the Magyar language.

In 1787, Kazinczy complained that in the lodges the Magyars still performed royal rite in Latin, and suggested that it be performed in Hungarian.²⁰ Kazinczy, though, rejected the notion that the revival of the Magyar language required the suppression of other languages: "My patriotism does not clash with my cosmopolitanism, and when I seek the flourishing of the Magyar language, I wish to advance its

cause in so far as I am able. I do not supplicate to that celestial sphere that would revive my language by harming others.”²¹

Szemere's education was in many ways the realization of Kazinczy's notion of polyglot linguistic revival. Educated in Lutheran schools in Sárospatak and Miskolc, he was taught German grammar and literature from age eight, and Latin from age fourteen. Magyar grammar, spelling, and calligraphy by the age of twenty, as part of the one of the first generations of young Hungarians to benefit from the publication of Magyar language primers.²² This was a formative period in Szemere's view that the triumph of the Magyar language need not preclude the use of other languages.

By the 1820s Miskolc had emerged as an important center of the Magyar cultural and linguistic revival, and was, in the words of Lajos Kossuth, “a cultural center of the pre-1848 years.” Indeed, Miskolc was one of the few places where Kossuth's exalted though premature view of Magyar nationalism was realized by the 1830s. Among the leaders of the linguistic revival in Miskolc was Szemere's mentor, László Palóczy. At Palóczy's behest, the county assembly implemented Law IV of 1805 that authorized the exclusive use of Magyar in the assembly's correspondence.²³ The focal point of this cultural and linguistic revival were the a national casino and theater. The casino, one of the first in Hungary, opened in 1833; the national theater opened a year later. Széchenyi recognized the significance of the casino at its opening ceremony: “It is sad that, in our great country, only in Miskolc is there an institution meeting this grand aim [of cultural revival]...nonetheless my heart rejoices that it has begun somewhere.”²⁴

Szemere was elected the casino's first president. Under his leadership, the casino became a springboard for further efforts to import Magyar culture into Miskolc, notably from Transylvania. Within a year after the casino opened, Szemere invited well-to-do residents of Borsod County to invest in a national theater. Miklós Wesselényi, one of the earliest noble patrons of Magyar culture and the sponsor of the Erdély Theater Company since 1800, provided materials for the first performance—a Magyar language performance of *The Barber of Seville*. Among the prominent actors who began their careers in the Miskolc Theater was Róza Laborfalvi, who would eventually marry the author Mór Jókai. The growing prestige of the theater attracted leading na-

tional reformers to Miskolc, including Széchenyi, who visited three times, Ferenc Deák, and Mihály Vörösmarty.²⁵

The presence of a national casino and theater in Miskolc anticipated and complimented a series of laws enacted by the National Diet with the aim of establishing Magyar as the language of public administration. Law 8 of 1830 prohibited individuals who did not know Hungarian from holding of public officials and being admitted to the bar or practicing law. Law 3 of 1832 required public registers to be kept in Hungarian. Law 6 of 1840 required petitions sent to the royal crown by the National Assembly and cities to be written in Hungarian. Law 2 of 1843–44 instructed judges to give their rulings in Hungarian and the National Assembly to confer in Hungarian, and made Magyar the exclusive language of the National Assembly.²⁶

When measured in terms of actual Magyar speakers, though, the impact of the casino and national theater was modest during the first half of the nineteenth century, even in Miskolc. There is anecdotal evidence that the number of individuals who spoke Magyar as a second language was also increasing. Writing during the 1860s, Miskolc artisan Ferenc J. Pfliegler recalled his mentor's description of the growing parity between Magyar and German during the 1830s: "My master Vilmos Trillhaus' grandparents came to Miskolc from Bavaria, settled here and were soon Magyarized. Uncle Vilmos, although German, spoke fluent Hungarian. German artisans would settle here from the German-speaking countryside and became good Hungarians at heart, although they retained German culture and character."²⁷

Yet, at the beginning of the 1830s, only a handful of intellectuals and statesmen wrote and spoke Magyar as their primary language. Szemere's willingness to distinguish between the use of Magyar in public and private life minimized the frustratingly phlegmatic spread of Magyar as a widespread vernacular. From 1832 on, for example, the minute books of the largest Lutheran Church was kept in Hungarian.²⁸ Szemere articulated the importance of this distinction in an address to the National Diet: "The diplomatic use of the Magyar language is extended to congressional, public administrative, and governmental matters and to matters pertaining to the essential needs of the survival of the Hungarian state; communal manners shall be dealt with in the language of the majority of the inhabitants." The upshot is

that Szemere did not presume that the preeminence of Magyar nationalism required the disappearance or total subordination of other nationalism.²⁹

The distinction between use of Magyar as a language of administration and as a *lingua franca* was crucial in Szemere's assessment of the spread of the language among Jews in Miskolc. As early as the late eighteenth century there is evidence of Magyar-speaking Jews in Miskolc. In 1790, for example, David Altman spoke Magyar when arguing a case before the Miskolc magistrate.³⁰ Later observers had the impression that Jews in frontier areas like Miskolc were at the forefront of reviving the language. In 1840, Aurél Dessewffy noted the spread of Magyar among Jews:

I do not share the fear that the emancipation of the Jews will threaten the interests of our nation, because I have found that isolated peoples assimilate especially easily into the nation in whose midst they live. *I know Alföld Jews who have already become perfect Magyars from a language point of view.* As to other difficulties, I completely agree that as soon as they are not forced to engage in commerce they will devote themselves to other means of sustenance, and, in this way, their menacing competition with Christians will diminish.... Given these general considerations, we have a legal obligation to the Jews that... I promise that the next national assembly will issue a proper decree.³¹

The difficulty in assessing the use of Magyar as a spoken language among Jews with any precision is not unique to Miskolc, but a general problem in Hungarian Jewish History. Two noteworthy attempts to estimate the number of Magyar-speaking Jews, one by Viktor Karady and the other by Michael Silber, indicate the near impossibility of this task with respect to the first half of the nineteenth century. Karady's estimates suggest an increasing rate of Magyarization for the post-1867 period, but he uncovered relatively little evidence for the pre-1867 period. Extrapolating from Karady's and other data, Silber arrived at tentative estimates for the earlier period. While he discovered high rates of literacy, the census data he used surveyed literacy but did not assess specifically Magyar literacy. In short, it is still impossible to gauge with any accuracy the number of Magyar-speaking Jews prior to the 1870s.³²



The new protocol that was renewed under the presidency of the noted officer Joseph Wolf Brody the Head of the Kehilla, our noted guide and teacher [Moreinu/Rabbenu] Jonah Zuckermantl, the officer [ha-kazin] Reb Anshel Stern, the officer Reb Ezriel Schwartz, our guide and teacher the officer Tevel Moskowitz, the officer Reb Moshe Leb Segal, the officer Reb Itzig Lusztig, the officer Reb Anshel Eigner, the officer Ezekiel Klein, the officer Reb Hertz Segal, the officer Jacob Schwartz, the officer Abraham Greenfield, First Righteous Trustee the officer Reb Gershon Reberg, Second Righteous Trustee the officer Leb Paczauer, in order to transcribe all events great and small like the other peoples under whose protection we live... The protocol begins on the first day of Adar, 5595 (2 March 1835).

With permission of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

The limited use of Magyar among Jews was, to some extent, overshadowed by the active participation of a handful of Jews in the dissemination of the Magyar language. In 1842, Jewish industrialists Joseph Lichtenstein and Joseph Furman funded the Hungarian-language *Miskolci Értesítő*, the first such weekly newspaper in Miskolc and the first in Hungary west of Transylvania. By helping to found this newspaper, Miskolc Jews were seen as financiers of Magyar culture. In addition, three Miskolc Jews—Abraham Hochmuth, Mór Paczauer, Mihály Heilprin—were charter members of the *Committee for the Dissemination of the Magyar Language among the Jews*, a state-wide organization formed to encourage the use of Magyar among Jews.³³

Heilprin, in particular, was an odd and dramatic exception to the limited use of Magyar among Miskolc Jews. The son of Pinchas Heilprin, Heilprin had immigrated to Miskolc with his parents and siblings from Piotrov, Galicia, in 1843. By 1848, within five years after immigrating to Hungary, Heilprin had learned to read and speak Hungarian well enough to compose poetry in his newly adopted language.

The significance of a “Galicianer” like Heilprin mastering the Magyar language, at a time when Jewish immigrants from Galicia were typically regarded as emblematically foreign and un-assimilable, was well known to Szemere. In 1845, Szemere had sponsored Heilprin’s petition to obtain a license to operate a bookstore; in 1848, Szemere named Heilprin as his personal assistant, a position Heilprin held throughout the revolution of 1848–49. For Szemere, Heilprin personified and epitomized Szemere’s belief that one’s affinity for Magyar language and culture could and should be measured by one’s public behavior; in this case, Heilprin’s public persona as shopkeeper, amateur poet, and revolutionary.³⁴

More important from Szemere’s perspective was the increasingly prevalent use of Magyar in the communal administration of Miskolc Jewry. The transformation of the language of the communal protocols from Yiddish-Deutsch to Magyar began at the end of the 1830s and continued through 1851, at which time the counter-revolutionary policies of the Habsburgs changed the language to German. From the outset, the shift to Magyar in communal records depended on which organization within the Jewish community was keeping the records. As a rule, the older protocols lagged behind. The protocol of the Jew-

ish Burial Society remained exclusively in Yiddish-Deutsch. The protocol of the County Assembly, whose primary sponsor was the Royal crown, was recorded in Yiddish-Deutsch until the organization disbanded in 1851.

More complex was the mixture of languages in the protocol of the Miskolc Kehilla. Until 1838, it was recorded exclusively in Yiddish-Deutsch. From 1838 on, Magyar appeared with increasing frequency, as documents pertaining to external relations between the Jewish community and some outside agency were copied into the protocol in the original Magyar. These included the statutes of the Jewish Guild, commercial contracts between Jews and nobles, and residence permits to newly arriving Jews. The protocols of the county-Kehilla and the Miskolc protocols that begin in 1847 were recorded entirely in Hungarian.

The language of the protocols, beyond showing that a two or three communal secretaries could write the language, reveal next to nothing about the number of Jews in Miskolc who spoke Hungarian. More important, perhaps, they indicate the desire among Jewish communal leaders to remain in sync with the prevailing impulses emanating from liberals like Szemere. In this sense, the protocols paralleled the letters and speeches written and delivered by patriotic, liberal nobles who had only the barest grasp of the Magyar language. Lacking a real grasp of the language, the Jews of Miskolc demonstrated their commitment to the linguistic revival through written documents.

The recruits: patriotism and profit

The shift to Magyar as the language of Jewish communal administration was a gradual process that took nearly a decade. More complex perhaps was the decision by Miskolc Jewry to provide an annual quota of Jewish recruits. This decision was taken abruptly in 1840. At the same time, more than the change in the language of the protocols, the decision to provide recruits eventually evolved into an extension of the administrative strategy of the 1830s, that is, as a way to raise money and control immigration.

During the early 1840s, Jews in Borsod County were among the first in Hungary to serve in the military since this obligation had been

curtailed in 1815.³⁵ As early as 1833, the Jews of Miskolc had been expected to provide an annual quota of recruits. This was part of a broader effort to recruit more conscripts from the region; since 1831, the city of Miskolc had been required to provide twenty-five conscripts annually.³⁶ During the 1830s, the Jewish community evaded this requirement, initially through a straightforward bribe: "The Kehilla executive instructed Joseph Greenbaum to meet with the Commissar regarding the precise number of conscripts, and to offer a gift in exchange for their exemption..."³⁷ Subsequently, the conscription ritual degenerated into a farce, in which the leaders of the Jewish community rounded up a tawdry collection of would-be recruits and then paid a fee to exempt them: "Regarding the conscription for the coming year, a temporary injunction is given by the honorable magistrate... The poor and idle among us will be impressed, and then exempted by payment of an honorarium of two ducats from the communal treasury."³⁸

Beginning in November 1840, the county imposed an annual tax on Borsod County Jews, in lieu of providing conscripts, to defray the costs of stationing troops in Borsod County: "Bearing in mind that, according to a state decree, troop placement is by lottery...we ask that communities help station troops and, to this end, we impose a tax of 2,500 forints to pay for it."³⁹ Subsequent negotiations between the Borsod County Kehilla and the county determined that the tax would be divided proportionately among Borsod County communities. Those of Miskolc district, including the Jewish community of Miskolc paid 850, twice the amount of Csaba, Eger, and Szendrő districts. Szentpéter district paid the smallest share—350 forints.⁴⁰ The new tax, it should be noted, did not displace the annual bribery ritual. In January 1841 the Jews gave the ranking military officer a gift of twelve forints to the ranking military officer and László Kiss, the county official in charge of recruitment, forty forints.⁴¹

Between November 1840 and January 1841, however, county officials and the county Jewish executive reached a new agreement regarding Jewish recruits. The Jewish executive agreed to deliver twenty-five Jewish recruits to the local regiment, with no apparent attempt to exempt these recruits from service: "The above agreement verifies that the Israelites who reside in Borsod County have pre-

sented twenty-five recruits to the most recent National Assembly... All have already pledged to fulfill the obligations placed upon them by the county executive (*Vorstand*)."⁴² This change of heart may have been precipitated by two Borsod County Jews, Ignác Spon and Abraham Freistadt, who enlisted on their own. In response, the Jewish executive informed the county: "Because two Borsod County Jews have previously enlisted, we will now deliver an additional twenty-three recruits."⁴³ By the end of February 1841, twenty-three recruits enlisted, each of whom was selected by the Jewish executive and drawn from all four districts of Borsod County, in addition to the two who had already enlisted previously.

From the outset, Jewish communal leaders embraced the possibility of Jews serving in the army, in sharp contrast to the reluctance of Russian Jews: "As a result of the County decision the County Jews are obligated to provide a total of 25 Jewish recruits... *this was determined to be good and advisable*."⁴⁴ In fact, Jewish leaders were concerned primarily with how to cover the costs of provisioning the Jewish conscripts. Typical of their relations with the county nobility, the Jewish executive transformed the annual recruitment into a source of communal revenue. Having allotted 85 of the 2,500 forints collected for the military tax for each recruit, the Jewish executive invited each recruit to deposit this annual stipend in the treasury of the County Kehilla. This, in turn, allowed the latter to invest the money and share the revenue with each recruit.

The upshot is that the powerful symbolism of Jews serving in the military was noted by Szemere, who regarded military service as a telling indicator of Jewish patriotism. In July 1849, only weeks before he issued the Edict of Emancipation, he reflected on the military actions of Jews as a justification for citizenship:

My lords: if the Jewish people are there on the battlefield and shed blood for such a homeland to which had not yet declared them citizens, if they happily sacrifice their life and property for a freedom they can only hope for, for those rights which are not yet certain as they are for others who fight with them, then the time has come for the National Assembly to take pay heed to the sacred principle according to which Jews, too, are citizens of the county, equal to others in rights and obligations.⁴⁵

Szemere delivered this speech late in the revolution, after the widespread military accomplishments of Jews could be duly noted. Yet it seems plausible that Szemere referred here not only to the throngs of Jews who volunteered in 1848, but also to those who had enlisted prior to the revolution. He later acknowledged the willingness of Jews to fight and die for the Magyar cause as the exemplar of Jewish loyalty: "I will not speak at length of the Jews, except to say that, for us, they are an important class due to their number, wealth, and profound attachment to their adopted country. In 1848 they proved their valor with their blood and sacrifice."⁴⁶

Augmenting immigration control

The annual delivery of Jewish recruits, in addition to providing a way for Jews to demonstrate their loyalty to the county, became a means of demonstrating their commitment to controlling immigration. For Szemere, efforts such as this by Jews to control immigration were a key element in complying with noble aims. Like other nobles, Szemere regarded immigration as a deleterious by-product of political reform and, in particular Jewish emancipation, and presumed that emancipation would prompt an influx of Jewish immigrants from neighboring states that persecuted Jews:

Such is the impact of immigration. It is the type of question that each county follows a specific course of action according to a particular situation. We must acknowledge that, although there is much racial diversity in our country, we must be wary of it for the sake of self-preservation. In neighboring countries the Jews are oppressed, consequently our mitigating the suffering here would animate the appetite of immigrants not to bear a comparable burden... Accordingly, lawful interest demands that the rush of immigrants be abated. In particular, settlement is not something that can be claimed.. Rather it is the direct outcome of public policy and not public law.⁴⁷

The annual delivery of recruits became the forum for the Kehilla to revisit its commitment to curtail immigration. By the end of January 1841, the new recruitment policy was refined by four conditions, the last of which denied immigrants the right to serve:

In any case, by whatever means the cost of provisioning these recruits will be covered, we kindly hope that the county, with paternalistic graciousness, will ease this burden by allowing us to provide substitutes... The county will use the 2,500 silver coins which is already being collected, and in its graciousness, will accept as recruits only those born in the county... The twenty-five recruits will be provided by the entire county community and not by district.⁴⁸

Within six months after this policy went into effect, in June 1841, it became known that two of the recruits, Joseph Reich and Jacob Spattler, were of foreign origin. The subsequent exchange underlined the disparate attitude of county officials toward Jewish immigrants from Galicia and the Czech Lands. When it was alleged that Reich was a native of Galicia, the county magistrate asked the Jewish executive to replace him:

The County magistrate inquired of us whether one of the recruits we provided, Joseph Reich, was born in Hungary. We responded as follows: we erroneously sent Joseph Reich as a recruit and, since he was not Hungarian-born, we would like send another one... Due to the cost caused by such carelessness, each recruit from now on will carry a letter that indicates his place of origin...enclosed is a letter indicating that Reich's replacement is not from Galicia but rather from Szepes County...⁴⁹

Later, when Reich's alleged Polish origins turned out to be ill-founded, the Jewish executive had him reinstated:

Regarding Joseph Reich, we have appended a letter indicating that he is not from Galicia but born in Szepes County, that he resides in our town, and presented himself to be conscripted as a soldier—and that we did not wrongly present him to you. Thus, we beseech you...to spare us and accept the recruit Joseph Reich...⁵⁰

The Czech-born Spattler's case was less cut and dry. He claimed to be Hungarian-born, but, unlike Reich, lacked the proper documentation. Nonetheless he was allowed to remain a recruit, seemingly because of his artisanal background:

we indicated, on the occasion of the last recruitment, that we would send a new recruit instead of Jacob Spattler, who is not Hungarian—but Czech-

born, as was done in the case of Galicia-born Joseph Reich... Jacob Spattler is pursuing a career of master shoemaker as a journeyman, he recommended himself as a recruit, and whereas he was Hungarian born but was unable to show documents, he was conscripted as a recruit, but only on the condition that if in time it came to light that he was born in another country, another recruit would have to be chosen...⁵¹

The two cases underline a discrepancy in the anti-immigration mentality of the nobility between immigrants of Polish and Czech origin. Clearly, not all foreign-born Jews were deemed as foreign as others. Despite the fact that Reich and Spattler claimed to be residents of the same county, because Reich was suspected of having roots in Galicia, he was deemed less than acceptable. Only after presented documented proof that he was not born in Galicia was he deemed suitable for military service. Spattler, though he lacked documented proof that he was Hungarian-born, was not dismissed.

The close scrutiny of the origins of Jewish recruits anticipated a broader campaign by the Miskolc Kehilla to crack down in illegal immigration, first and foremost, to be more selective in accepting new residents. This campaign was prompted by the city magistrate, who instructed the Kehilla to "hold an inquiry regarding Jews who are sneaking in and divide the city into sections and have inquiries in each section that if someone catches sight of a foreigner he will report it immediately to the executive council."⁵² The initial attempts to fulfill this request revealed the laxity with which the Kehilla evaluated potential settlers, such as the case of Bernát Ráth: "Bernát Ráth's petition to settle here was granted. However, the petitioner, a worthless individual in terms of his moral behavior, has lived here already for two years. How? By what means did he gain admission? We do not know and yet we granted [permission]."⁵³ From this point on, the Kehilla denied admission to any applicant who had no documentation.⁵⁴

The ability of the Kehilla to prevent illegally residing Jews from serving as recruits reflected a larger success in controlling immigration. By 1848, communal efforts to curtail immigration, had come to fruition. According to the Census of 1848, just over fifty percent of the nearly 3,000 Jews who lived in Miskolc had been born there, and an additional forty percent had lived there for more than ten years.

On the other hand, the effort to prevent immigrants from marrying their way in was not as successful. Of 476 married couples, 219 had one spouse not from Miskolc, and there were only 31 couples in which neither spouse was born there. More important, though, fewer than 100 Jews of Polish origin were listed in the census.⁵⁵

The County-Kehilla: a vehicle for civic duty

Though the Jewish recruits, immigration control, and the use of Magyar in communal administration undoubtedly allayed Szemere's concern regarding the desirability of Jewish emancipation, he was still critical of Jewish communal organization. He called for a revamping of the leadership and communal administration of the Jews:

In accordance with the principle of not making religious distinctions between the citizens of the land it is declared that members of the mosaic faith born or legally residing within in the borders of the Hungarian state, are endowed with the same political and civic rights as inhabitants of other faiths... The members of the mosaic faith should convene an assembly of clergy and popularly elected individuals both to manifest and reform their branches *and to improve their clerical structure according to the demands of the age*.⁵⁶

Szemere attributed remarkably little importance to the particular religious beliefs and practices of Jews. His notion of reform did not entail abandoning religious practices or beliefs, as Kossuth's had. He was more concerned with creating a more effective Jewish communal administration for the Jewish community than with elevating one denomination over the other:

Currently every rabbi and community is dependant on one another, making modern improvements impossible. A coherent system must be created and every barrier that separates Jews from civil life must be broken down.... Their interconnected clerical framework should be re-examined. Within the bosom of the Jews the Orthodox and Reformist denominations degenerate daily into ever angrier hatred, and the Jews lack the power to actuate and ensure its own development....Communal frameworks cannot remain in their old forms, consequently they must be superceded by new institutions.⁵⁷

Szemere's call for a more effective clerical framework was anticipated by Miskolc Jewry in the formation of the Borsod County Kehilla, a county-wide Jewish organization presided over and dominated by the Miskolc Jewish elite. During the 1840s, the actions of the County-Kehilla dovetailed with Szemere's aim of improving county administration, in two respects. First, County-Kehilla coordinated efforts by Jews in Borsod County to assist in the county-wide response to the fires of 1843; second, the authority of the County-Kehilla over religious matters vitiated the inter-communal religious conflicts that Szemere regarded as singularly counter-productive.

The ascendancy of the Miskolc Jewish elite over Borsod County Jewry through the medium of the Borsod-County Kehilla became evident in the Jewish response to the fires that broke out across Borsod County in the summer 1843. The initial response of communal leaders was to appeal to more established and putatively wealthier communities for financial assistance: "Following the outbreak of fire yesterday in our town, many of our people are much impoverished. The victims remain without food—help must be provided for victims...the scribe is instructed to write to six communities for assistance: Pest, Óbuda, Pressburg, Nagyvárád, Pápa, and Kassa."⁵⁸

For reasons unknown, no assistance was forthcoming from these other communities. Especially pressing was the need to repair the damage to the synagogue. The Miskolc Kehilla first attempted to raise enough money internally, and announced that, "In order to find the money to construct a new synagogue, it is decided that propertied individuals will assemble to discuss this further." To urge generosity among those with means, one of the officers made a vow over a Torah scroll, pledging the Kehilla's intention to rebuild the synagogue. When this, too, failed to raise enough money, the Kehilla leaders turned to their noble investors in the kosher bank for support: "A request was delivered to the three *Bankherren*, Károly Soltész, Gábor Makály and Paul Timschmied asking them to soften the terms in the arrangement with the kosher bank." The nobles lent 20,000 forints to repair the synagogue.⁵⁹

In the aftermath of the fire, the question arose as to who would provide aid for the fire victim: the Miskolc Kehilla or the County Kehilla. Although other Jewish communities had sustained damage, the

bulk of the aid would go to Miskolc Jews; in effect, communities other than Miskolc would be asked to compensate Miskolc Jews. The County Kehilla helped repair the damage in Miskolc, arguing that Miskolc Jews were entitled to the same support as any other community:

We declare that, since our co-religionists sustained much damage during the recent outbreak of fire, the county Israelites should compensate the damage from the county treasury so that the unfortunate should not be saddled... It is therefore decided to advance a certain sum of money to the victims of the Miskolc fire, since a comparable case occurred in Szent Péter, which indeed requires assistance, we will go forward in both cases.⁶⁰

In reality, because Miskolc Jews were the principle donors to the county-wide Kehilla's treasury, most of aid to Miskolc fire victims came from Miskolc Jews.

The predominance of the Miskolc Jewish elite over Borsod County Jews was no less evident in imposing uniform standards of ritual slaughter, circumcision, and decorum on the synagogue. In May 1843, Rabbi Moses Ezekiel Fischmann, acting in a dual capacity as chief rabbi of Miskolc and Borsod County, issued a three-part statement in the synagogue on behalf of the Kehilla, which, codified the Kehilla's authority in the matters of residence, kosher meat, and the synagogue:

- 1) all kosher meat must be processed in the local slaughterhouse, and meat that is brought in for a remote location...will be disqualified as *Traif* meat...and all meat here must be approved and selected in the presence of our beloved rabbi and av bet din, otherwise it will be deemed unfit meat (*Nevela*)...and none should engage in the sale of foreign meat...
- 2) One is enjoined by the almighty that every newborn child should be enrolled...thus the *mohels*, who are all communal employees, will be fined for not reporting a child whom they circumcise, and all girls named in the synagogue must also be reported...
- 3) there will be an emphatic request not to violate the decorum in the synagogue and to discontinue talking to one another during the service...a punishment should be fixed for this desecration.⁶¹

In effect, this edict extended the decisions taken by the Miskolc Kehilla during the 1830s to the entire county. This authority over religious matters was further expanded in a series of edicts from 1847. First, in response to a complaint from Moses Fischmann that com-

munities subordinate to Miskolc were not paying the requisite fees to the Miskolc Kehilla, the latter required any community in Borsod County that built a new synagogue to pay a tax to the Miskolc Kehilla.⁶² In addition, the Miskolc Kehilla extended its control over kosher meat throughout the county. Formally individual communities were allowed to set their own price for kosher meat. In reality, since Miskolc was the largest dealer in kosher meat, the Miskolc Kehilla could impose its will in this matter on the entire county, and did so in 1847 with the following three policies:

- 1) Kosher meat brought in to Miskolc must be sold at the same as kosher meat sold here.
- 2) If someone slaughters lamb or beef he must charge the ship of the entire slaughter with Samuel Fischer's contract; it is prohibited to slaughter even smaller shipments at any cost and the individual who does shall not sell because it will be confiscated by the contractor.
- 3) It is not permissible to deal with slaughterers without a receipt in cash or credit, and the local slaughterers are forbidden to deal with them or be punished after which they will still be liable...⁶³

The emergence of a well-ordered county-wide Jewish administration, coupled with the annual quota of Jewish recruits, dovetailed with Szemere's broader notion that a government had to be able to maintain law and order so as to be deemed effective. Szemere expressed this view in January 1845. In an address to the Borsod County Assembly, he called for the creation of a Hungarian national guard: "Yes, we need a free country and free men, and we must have responsible government. However, a responsible government that respects the higher interest of freedom must have a well-developed, standing national guard."⁶⁴ The notion of effective government resting on the presence of a national guard would face its ultimate test with the outbreak of revolution in 1848.

At the outbreak of the revolution, though, Eötvös and Szemere were rare exceptions in supporting emancipation so unabashedly. A year and a half of revolution and war gave Jews across Hungary the opportunity to emulate the patriotism demonstrated by Miskolc Jewry. By the summer of 1849, as the view of Szemere and Eötvös became the norm rather than the exception, emancipation followed

with little resistance. When the debate over emancipation resumed during the mid-1860s, after being derailed for a decade by Habsburg Neo-Absolutism, the affinity of Hungarian Jewry for Magyar nationalism was no longer in doubt.

Notes

- 1 This oft-cited passage is quoted here in Nathaniel Katzburg, "The Public Debate over Jewish Emancipation in Hungary during the 1840s" *Bar Ilan Annual I* (1973) p. 293; it has also been quoted in George Barany, "Magyar-Jew or Jewish Magyar" in' see also Jacob Katz, *From Prejudice to Destruction: Anti-Semitism, 1700–1933*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1980) p. 234.
- 2 Károly Berecz, *A régi "fiatal Magyarország": Emlékezések, vázlatok* [Old "Young Hungary": Recollections, Sketches] (Budapest, 1898) p. 57.
- 3 Csaba Fazekas, "Az első népképviselői országgyűlés történetéből: Palóczy László beszédei, képviselői indítványai" [On the History of the first national representative assembly: László Palóczy's speeches and motions] in István Dobrossy ed., *Tanulmányok és források az 1848–1849 forradalom és szabadságharc történetéhez* (Miskolc, 1998) p. 82.
- 4 Dobrossy, *Miskolc története* III/1 pp. 45–47.
- 5 Miklós Bényei, *Eötvös József könyvei és eszméi* [Joseph Eötvös' Books and Ideas] (Debrecen, 1996) pp. 43–44. His connections to Miskolc are discussed in "Eötvösünk és Szemerénk': Eötvös József borsodi működése és kapcsolatai" [Our Eötvös and our Szemere: Joseph Eötvös' activities and writings in Borsod County] *Napjaink* 27:8 (1988) pp. 14–16, and 27:9 pp. 14–16.
- 6 Dobrossy, *Miskolc története* III/1 p. 45.
- 7 Ambrus Miskolczy, *A zsidóemancipáció Magyarországon 1849-ben: Az 1849-es magyar zsidóemancipációs törvény és ismeretlen iratai* [Jewish Emancipation in Hungary in 1849: The Jewish Emancipation law and its unknown documents] (Budapest, 1999) p. 23.
- 8 Nathaniel Katzburg, "The Public Debate over Jewish Emancipation in Hungary during the 1840s" p. 283.
- 9 Bényei, *Eötvös József*, p. 89.
- 10 Eötvös, *A zsidók emancipációja* [The Emancipation of the Jews] (Reprinted: Budapest 1981), pp. 32–33.
- 11 Eötvös, *Zsidók emancipációja*, p. 29.
- 12 Ibid., p. 2.
- 13 József Eötvös, *The Village Notary: a Romance of Hungarian Life*, trans. Otto Wenckstern. (New York, D. Appleton & Company, 1850) p. 145.
- 14 Baron Joseph Eötvös, *Vélemény a fogházjavítás ügyében*, [An Opinion in the Matter of Prison Reform] (Hereinafter Eötvös, *Vélemény*) (Pest, 1838) pp. 4–5. For fur-

- ther discussion of Eötvös' views on Jews and prisons, see Stephen Béla Vardy, "The Origins of Jewish Emancipation in Hungary, the Role of Baron Joseph Eötvös" in *Ungarn Jahrbuch VII*. (Munich, 1976) pp. 137–167; and Vardy, *Baron Joseph Eötvös: A Literary Biography*. (Boulder, 1987) pp. 83–99 and 114–123. I suggested an alternative interpretation of Eötvös and the Jews. See Howard Lupovitch, "Prison Reform, Animal Rights and the Jewish Question in Reform-Era Hungary," presented at the 1997 meeting of the Association for Jewish Studies in Boston, December 20, 1997.
- 15 Dobrossy, *Miskolc története* III/1 p. 47.
 - 16 "Szemere's Speech to the Chamber of Deputies on the Emancipation of the Jews" (July 28, 1849) Róbert Hermann, ed., *Szemere Bertalan* (Budapest, 1998) p. 93.
 - 17 Róbert Hermann, *Szemere*, pp. 96–97.
 - 18 *Jegyzőkönyv*, p. 57:b #32 (October 22, 1844).
 - 19 *Ibid.*, p. 7:a #28 (May 24, 1840).
 - 20 Elemér Jancsó, *A magyar szabádközművesség történeti szerepe a XVIII-ik században* (Cluj, 1936) p. 108. Temporarily closed from 1788–1794, it reopened quietly in 1794.
 - 21 "Kazinczy to Lucian Musiczky, February 5, 1812" quoted in Antal Wéber "Kazinczy példája" [The Example of Kazinczy] *Magyar Tudomány* 27:10 (1982) p. 737.
 - 22 Sándor Csorba, *Szemere Bertalan neveltetése és pályakezdése, 1812–1838* [Bertalan Szemere's upbringing and entrée, 1812–1838] (Miskolc, 1984) p. 3ff. His first Magyar primers were *Rövid magyar Grammatika* and *Hármas kis Tükörnek*,
 - 23 Mihály Földvári ed., *Törvényhatósági tudósítások: Kossuth Lajos levelezése 1836. évi július 1-től évi 1837. május 7-ig* [Municipal Records: Lajos Kossuth's Correspondence from July 1, 1836 to May 7, 1837] (Budapest, 1879) p. 182.
 - 24 Dobrossy, *Miskolc írásban és képekben* II p. 40. On the importance of national casinos in Hungary, see Michael Silber, "The Entrance of Jews into Hungarian Society in Vormarz: the case of the Casinos" in Jonathan Frankel and Steven J. Zipperstein eds., *Assimilation and Community: the Jews in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) pp. 284–323.
 - 25 *Ibid.*, p. 41.
 - 26 Fehér, "Reformkori sajtóviták a magyar tanítási nyelvről" *Magyar Könyvszemle* 114:2 (1991) pp. 151–152.
 - 27 Ferenc J. Pfliegler, *Életem: egy miskolci polgár visszaemlékezései, 1840–1918* [My Life: The Recollections of a Miskolc Burger] (Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén Archive Press: Miskolc 1996), p. 16.
 - 28 Dobrossy, *Miskolc története* IV/2 p. 850.
 - 29 Miskolczy, *Jewish Emancipation*, p. 18.
 - 30 Dobrossy, *Miskolc története* III/1 p. 471.
 - 31 Aurél Dessewffy, "A zsidóságról" *Összes művei* vol 16 p. 201. (italics mine)
 - 32 Viktor Karady, "A zsidó 'tuliskolázás' kérdése a történelmi Magyarországon" in *A zsidó iskolaügy története Magyarországon* (Budapest, 1994) pp. 7–9; Silber, *Roots of the Schism*, pp. 188–212.

- 33 Ibid., p. 947.
- 34 István Csapláros, "Heilprin Mihály, az 1848–1849-es magyar szabadságharc elfelejtett költője" [Mihály Heilprin: forgotten poet of the 1848–49 Hungarian War of Independence] *Múlt és jövő* 2:2 (1999) p. 33.
- 35 Silber, *Roots of the Schism*, pp. 103–108.
- 36 Dobrossy, *Miskolc története* III/1 pp. 407–408.
- 37 *Pinkas ha-Kehilla* p. 23, (June 19, 1833).
- 38 *Protocolle*, p. 264:a #125 (29 Nov 1836).
- 39 *Jegyzőkönyv* 13:a-13:b #18 (November 23, 1840).
- 40 Ibid., p. 14:a #19, (January 1841); *County Gemeinde*, p. 70:b #40, (January 10, 1841).
- 41 *Jegyzőkönyv*, p. 10:a #3 (Jan 28, 1841).
- 42 Ibid., p. 31:b #64 (January 27, 1842).
- 43 Ibid., p. 16:a-b #24. (February 2, 1841) At the very least, that two Jews enlisted voluntarily indicates that military service in the Habsburg army did not instill Hungarian Jews with the fear that recruitment into the Tsar's army elicited from Russian Jews.
- 44 *Jegyzőkönyv* p. 15:a #21, (January 27, 1841). (Italics mine)
- 45 Bertalan Szemere, "Address to the Chamber of Deputies" quoted in Gábor Schweitzer, "A toleranciától az emancipációig: a magyar zsidóság az 1848–1849-es forradalom és szabadságharc idején" [From Toleration to Emancipation: Hungarian Jewry at the time of the 1848–49 Revolution and War of Independence, hereinafter Schweitzer, *From Toleration to Emancipation*] *Valóság* 9 (1998) p. 107.
- 46 Barthélemy (Bertalan) de Szemere, *La Question Hongroise (1849–1860)* (Paris, 1860) pp. 31–32.
- 47 Hermann, *Szemere*, p. 96.
- 48 *Jegyzőkönyv*, p. 15:a #21 (January 27, 1841).
- 49 Ibid., 21:a-b #33 (June 15, 1841).
- 50 Ibid., 25:a-b #51 (August 4, 1841).
- 51 Ibid., 25:a-b #51 (August 4, 1941).
- 52 *Cultusgemeinde* p. 66 #134.
- 53 Ibid., p. 87 #194
- 54 See, for example, *ibid.*, p. 19 #34; p. 92 #210 and 211.
- 55 *Conscriptum Judaeorum* (Miskolc, 1848).
- 56 Hermann, *Szemere*, p. 97. (Italics mine)
- 57 Ibid.
- 58 *Protocolle*, p. 420 a-b #43 (July 20, 1843).
- 59 Ibid., p. 420 #45-49 (July 23, 1843).
- 60 *Jegyzőkönyv*, p. 52 #9 (September 5, 1843).
- 61 Ibid., p. 414:b #11 (May 18, 1843).
- 62 Ibid., p. 67 #135 (October 24, 1847)
- 63 Ibid., p. 35 #69 (June 20, 1847).
- 64 Miskolczy, *Jewish Emancipation*, p. 23.

*Revolution by Proxy:
Jews in the Hinterland, 1848–1850*

The outbreak of revolution in March 1848 prompted varied responses from the city of Miskolc and Miskolc Jewry. In late March, the city of Miskolc petitioned Habsburg monarch Ferdinand to grant Miskolc the status of a royal free city, a status that the city elders had coveted for decades. In contrast, the leaders of the Miskolc Kehilla made clear their support for the Hungarian cause: “We, the elected officers authorize in the name of the entire community that, in the event of unrest or conscription, we will do that which is expected of Miskolc Israelites in political matters by the Magyar Nation.”¹

In strictly legal terms these acts yielded opposite results. In May 1848, Ferdinand elevated the city of Miskolc to the status of royal free city, giving the burghers of Miskolc an apparent political victory. At the same time, the Hungarian national assembly balked at emancipating Hungarian Jews in the spring of 1848, despite the patriotic sentiments expressed by Jews in Miskolc and elsewhere in Hungary.

Indeed, this was a striking moment in the path to Jewish emancipation in Hungary. At the height of idealistic revolutionary fervor, ardent advocates of Jewish emancipation waited more than a year before emancipating Hungarian Jewry—reminiscent of Paris, 1790. To be sure, their reluctance was fueled by anti-Jewish hysteria in response to the prospect of conscripting Jews into the *Honvéd*, or Hungarian Home Army. Even so, it is remarkable that the same liberal nobles who, during the preceding eight years, had allowed Jews to settle in royal free cities, engage in crafts, and had eliminated the Toleration Tax did not emancipate the Jews in 1848.

As it turned out, though, these legal developments were overshadowed by other, more pressing events. The city of Miskolc obtaining a more prestigious legal status turned out to be a pyrrhic victory. Laws 23 and 24 of 1848 elevated Miskolc to the status of royal free city, but left jurisdiction in matters of settlement in the hands of the chief magistrate—in effect, the same situation that had existed since 1755.² The Borsod County assembly, increasingly in conflict with the Habsburg Crown, regarded the change in status as an outdated and moot point, as one county official noted: “We acknowledge that the question of royal city independence has become antiquated.” That the newly attained royal free city status had no effect on Miskolc Jewry was a telling indication of the discrepancy between legal acts and social reality in 1848. Despite the change in legal status that ostensibly gave Miskolc greater autonomy in political affairs, the events of 1848–49 immersed Miskolc more deeply into county affairs. By December 1848 the county diet merged city and county authority, affirming the city’s role as the political, administrative, economic, and cultural center of Borsod County.³ This change was captured in April 1848 by Bertalan Szemere in a letter to Joseph Vay that redefined the role of the county sheriff: [the title of sheriff] is more an obligation than a privilege; he is no less the protector of freedom than the preserver of order.”⁴

For Miskolc Jews, the excitement of revolution and the pressures of war cemented the rapprochement between Miskolc Jewry and the county nobility that had developed during the 1840s, the latest step in the expansion of their alliance with the county nobility. Under the direction of Miskolc Jewry, the county-wide Kehilla aided the county-wide war effort by providing and provisioning conscripts, by restricting immigration from Galicia, and by isolating and assisting cholera victims.

The fusion of city and county government, moreover, assured the dominance of the Miskolc Jewish elite over all Jewish communities in Borsod County. The urgency that pervaded in 1848 forced the Miskolc Jewish elite to act swiftly and unilaterally, often without the consent of other Jewish communities. The enhanced authority of Miskolc Jews was tested during the war by an internal revolt against Abraham Hochmuth, the Miskolc-appointed, county-wide superintendent of Jewish schools. Like the county itself, the county-wide leadership of the Miskolc Jewish elite emerged victorious but not unscathed.

In contrast to Pest and Pressburg, in Miskolc and Borsod County 1848–49 was not a time of drastic changes and dramatic events but of mundane, day-to-day hardships typically associated with wartime: an increase in lawlessness and recurring shortages of food and other material goods. The early days of the revolution in Miskolc, though, were suffused with an exuberant Eötvös-esque idealism. Jews and non-Jews alike experienced the initial events of the revolution from afar, that is, through eye-witness accounts and second-hand rumors. Nonetheless, these events stirred ambitious individuals to seize the opportunity presented by these tumultuous events in Pest, Pressburg, and Vienna.

Miskolc Jews, too, were affected by the excitement of the revolution's early days. Upon hearing of the outbreak of revolution in Pest, Mihály Heilprin volunteered in the Hungarian National Guard, and called on his fellow Jews to embrace the Magyar cause in a poem that expressed his connection to the Magyar cause, "The Song of the National Guard," that included the following call to arms: "We were servants, now we are free citizens/We groaned under a yoke/ now we have shaken it off/as Hungarians!... It is sweet to live, sweeter to die for your fatherland."⁵

Such sentiments stirred Jews in Miskolc and Borsod County to volunteer for the Hungarian Home Army beginning on March 15 in response to a call to arms issued by Samuel Farkassanyi.⁶ While it is impossible to determine the precise number of Jews who enlisted, there is evidence that several dozen Jews at least did, and there were undoubtedly more. In addition, Moses Ezekiel Fischmann volunteered as an army chaplain for Jewish volunteers from Miskolc, and served until the end of the war in August of 1849.⁷

Soon, however, the initial euphoria of revolution was interrupted by anti-Jewish riots in Pressburg. Szemere was among the first to condemn the violence as a breach of revolutionary aims and a dangerous threat to order and stability. On April 3, 1848, he co-authored a letter protesting the violence perpetrated against Jews:

Now there is nothing else to say other than the Israelites should be able to enjoy the rights they have obtained until now, that within the boundaries of the state they should be able to live in peace and to continue un-molested to

pursue their livelihood within the bounds of the law...whoever rises up against freedom, the very rights they themselves possess become worthless...Since law, order, tranquility, and lawfulness are in the hands of the national guard who erect unbreakable pillars that do not tolerate violence in a well-ordered state...Let us hope that the assistance of the national guard will obviate the intervention of a regular army, which is useful only where person and property are immediately threatened and where there is also much warning.⁸

Less than two weeks after the riots in Pressburg, moreover, an anti-Jewish riot nearly broke out in the Borsod County town of Nagymihály. In this case, the riots were narrowly averted by local police.

In response, the County-Kehilla and the newly formed emergency committee appealed for protection from the local authorities. Initially, the County-Kehilla responded in a conventional fashion, that is, by bribing the deputy sheriff 100 forints to make sure Jews received added security. The Jews offered 70 forints up front and 30 after the security was in place.⁹ As long as the sense of urgency remained, its decisions met with little resistance:

There is such danger in trafficking that our lives and property have no security and in our city and elsewhere Jews are driven out and badly injured—how such ill-fortune had befallen us, for which a sad example has already occurred in Nagy Mihály: yesterday, as Jews in the synagogue reached the end of the service, unscrupulous individuals tried to burst in, and, if the authorities had not arrived, God knows what would have happened. It is imperative that the authorities provide us with guards...¹⁰

Amidst such exigent circumstances, moreover, Jewish leaders began to question whether it was practical for the Miskolc Kehilla and the County Kehilla to function as separate entities. At the end of March 1848, the county Kehilla the County council created a special committee to deal with the problems threatening Borsod County Jews:

The County Israelites have decided to take action in this matter and appoint a committee on March 26 that has newly reinvigorated the executive with a separate treasury and trusteeship. As for the County Israelites, several individuals will be chosen to work for the improvement of our affairs and condition. They are authorized to use the County Israelite treasury for expenses.

In cases when the County Israelites will not support us, the higher committee remains in force and is authorized to levy a head tax and to spend 400 silver coins.¹¹

The singular aim of the new committee was obtaining adequate security for Jews in Borsod County.

The urgent atmosphere of April 1848, in this regard, forced smaller communities to acknowledge overtly the dominance of Miskolc. In effect, the new committee gave the Miskolc Jews who presided over it almost unfettered access to the County Kehilla's treasury, and more authority over the internal affairs of other Jewish communities:

In an assembly on April 27, 1848, Móricz Czukermendl and Albert Eigner were appointed heads of the committee...Miskolc Israelite community has decided to work with county Israelites, thus the county-wide tribunal is authorized to assist the Miskolc committee to work toward improving political matters and to assign expenses to the collective treasury of the County Israelites. If a district juror sees the need for expenses for his district, he will act only with the authority of the committee.¹²

While originally formed as an emergency committee in response to the fear of violence, it remained the *de facto* leadership of Borsod County Jewry until the end of 1849. This was due, in part, to the periodic emergence of potential hostility or violence against Jews. In July 1848, for example, a series of complaints lodged by Borsod County peasants against Moritz Czukermendl—the president of the County Kehilla—and two other leading Jewish money-lenders, prompted rumors of “smoldering disdain for Jews in the country” and imminent anti-Jewish riots. In response, on July 17, the county diet dispatched a regiment of national guardsmen to protect the three Jews.¹³ More importantly, the continued operation of the emergency committee allowed the Jewish elite to manage the growing complexities of communal administration, not least of all with respect to controlling illegal immigration.

From the outset, the outbreak of revolution posed a new challenge to communal efforts at curtailing immigration, symptomatic of the lawlessness that accompanied the outbreak of revolution. In one case,

Joseph Grünfeld, a Jew from Galicia, applied for residence under the guise that he was alone, and then tried to sneak in his wife and six children. When communal leaders discovered his large entourage and threatened to evict him, Grünfeld divorced his wife and obtained a single residence.¹⁴

In response to reports that illegal aliens were settling in Miskolc, the city council requested that the leaders of Miskolc Jewry step up efforts to curtail illegal settlement: "The City Council has sent us a directive according to which we should report any Jew who sneaks in; that we announce in the synagogue that anyone who sees a non-resident must inform the Jewish community council; that, for the time being, no one is allowed to acquire residence through marriage; and, lastly, that the sexton should keep a weekly register of Jewish visitors."¹⁵

The concern regarding illegal Jewish immigration was further aggravated with the outbreak of cholera in late June 1849. In retrospect, it is clear that the infection had been imported into Miskolc by occupying Russian troops; the first instances of cholera were detected less than forty-eight hours after the soldiers arrived. At the time, however, the outbreak of epidemic stirred up concerns for the menacing presence of foreigners, in general and Jews from Galicia, in particular. More than 400 residents of Miskolc died from complications relating to cholera during July and early August, fifty-one of them Jews. In response, the leaders of Miskolc Jewry quarantined and cordoned off the square of the city habited by pálinka brewers, many of whom were Jews from Galicia. This, they hoped, would allay concerns among the local populace at a time when the pressures of war threatened to undermine law and order.¹⁶

Alongside the need to control immigration was the growing pressure to support the war effort itself. From December 1848 through June of 1849, Miskolc was the base of operations for General Joseph Wysocki's Polish Legion, and an important base of operations in the military campaign against the Habsburgs.¹⁷ On December 17, Szemere returned to Miskolc as the liaison between the revolutionary government and the battlefield. Two days later, he, along with Samuel Farkassanyi asked the county to provide 2,500 recruits, to allocate 5,000 forints to provision the troops stationed in Borsod County, and

to quarter the troops. The initial response to these requests was tepid, prompting Szemere to respond in exasperation: "It is impossible that Borsod would not be able to provide at the very least 100 cavalry."¹⁸

By contrast, the ad hoc committee formed by the County-Kehilla responded with far greater enthusiasm and alacrity. Since the early 1840s, the County-Kehilla had been raising 2,500 forints annually to provision the 25 Jewish recruits. Now the ad hoc committee re-allocated this sum to the county to help the war effort. In addition, Jews across Borsod County provided transportation to soldiers.¹⁹

In the end, the military campaign against the Habsburgs was fought outside of Borsod County. Nonetheless, the need to provision and quarter troops, and the proximity of Borsod County to the battle-front and the military presence in the county disrupted the basic elements of day to day life. Indicative in this regard was the difficulty of inter-city travel and of sending and receiving mail, even within Borsod County. In December 1848, the head of the Borsod County postal service, at the behest of the local military commander, restricted travel to individuals with official passports:

Since in the arteries the strict lookout by the national guard put into effect by strict order of the ministry, in part for the removal of perceived suspicious things by apprehending those traveling without a passport, in part to confiscate weapons, gunpowder and other supplies smuggled in to the enemies of the army, has many times and in many place demonstrated absolute success; we ask that only those individuals provided with official passports."²⁰

In January 1849, the same official ordered that "letters potentially from adversary to adversary, whether official or not, whether suspicious or not, whether registered proclamations or not, shall be sent, unopened directly to Debrecen."²¹

The restrictions on travel, along with the obligations to provision and quarter troops brought the County-Kehilla, along with the entire town of Miskolc, to the brink of economic ruin. Feeding Wysocki's troops caused a meat shortage, forcing the County-Kehilla to ration what little meat there was, even to rationing giblets by May of 1849.²² In addition, the Jews were expected to provide Wysocki with the usual array of gifts they normally supplied to prominent noblemen. In

May, for example, they delivered several sacks of sugar to Wysocki and to the deputy sheriff.²³

At the same time, it is interesting to note that these orders restricted travel and mail across the board, that is, without differentiating between nobles and non-nobles or between Jews and non-Jews. For Jews and, more broadly, for non-nobles, this marked perhaps one of the first instances of a law being applied equally among the male population of Borsod County. While placing additional hardships on Jewish travelers, therefore, these orders marked a significant though undoubtedly inadvertent step toward eliminating the remaining disparity between Jews and non-Jews.

On July 28, 1849, the revolutionary government, under leadership of Prime Minister Bertalan Szemere, enacted a law removing all disabilities hitherto placed on native born and naturalized Jews in Hungary. The symbolic power of this moment was undeniable. Miskolc Jews, in particular, took pride in the fact that László Palóczy, Szemere's mentor and fellow representative from Borsod County, presided over the national assembly at Szeged that enacted this law and that Szemere was instrumental in its passage.²⁴

It is striking that the specific components of this decree closely corresponded with the expectations that Szemere had expressed regarding emancipation—the very expectations that Jews in Miskolc had met during the 1840s. The first clause underlined the importance of controlling immigration by explicitly singling out native-born and legally residing Jews:

Differences of faith between citizens of the country do not constitute differences regarding rights and obligations; according to this principle it is declared that *members of the mosaic persuasion who were born within the boundaries of the Hungarian kingdom or legally residing therein have all political and civic rights as inhabitants of other persuasions.*²⁵

The third clause, which allowed for the possibility of civil marriage between Jews and non-Jews, had minimal direct affect on Miskolc Jews, whose traditional demeanor precluded marrying outside the faith. Nonetheless, by underlining the inherent kinship between Jews and non-Jews, it was a foundation stone of the notion that Jews are Magyars and not foreigners: “marriage between members of the

Christian and Mosaic faith, in terms of their civil consequence, shall be considered valid. Such marriages are bound under civil authorities temporarily; a ruling on their format shall be determined.”

The final clause expressed the importance of reforming the clerical framework of the various branches of Judaism, reiterating Szemere’s call for a more efficient Jewish communal administration:

The adherents of the mosaic persuasion shall convene an assembly of its clergy and popular representatives, in part to give expression to its denominational branches and in this regard reform them; *in part to undertake improvements to make them conform to the wishes of the age from the vantage point of future clerical framework.*

In retrospect, though, it is clear that this edict asked nothing of Miskolc Jews that they had not already done. For Miskolc Jews, the significance of 1848–49 lies not in the creation of a new situation but in the consolidation of gradual changes that had developed during the previous decade. The emancipation edict acknowledged the maturing of relations between nobles and Jews. Szemere’s relationship with Jews was a far cry from a commercial contract between a magnate patron and a Jewish merchant. Szemere’s relationship with the Jews of Miskolc and Borsod County and, after 1848, with Hungarian Jewry as a whole, epitomized three dimensions of noble–Jewish relations that had emerged during the 1840s and matured in 1848–49. As a lesser noble, Szemere represented the extension of the noble involvement in noble–Jewish relations beyond magnate patrons. As a county representative, Szemere embodied the administrative relationship between county administration and county-wide Jewish administration. As a leader in the Magyar national revival, Szemere’s ties to Jews exemplified the growing rapprochement between Jews and Magyar nationalism.

The centrality of the county would be especially important for the internal development of Jewish communal life from 1849 and thereafter. The events of 1848–49, by fusing city administration in Miskolc with Borsod County administration, cemented the dominance of Miskolc lay elite over Borsod County Jews. In this regard, the emancipation edict of 1849 did not make Jews equal per se, not even to each other. Rather, it integrated Jews into the larger political and social hi-

erarchy; the Jewish commercial elite became part of county administration.

While cementing its relationship with the county administration, however, the County-Kehilla faced growing internal dissent. The issue that incited this dissent focused around school administration, and paralleled the issues of the revolution: the putative despotic role of Miskolc Jews, the alleged Polish origins of some of the teachers, and the Germanophile tendencies of the school's superintendent Abraham Hochmuth.

Twice during the spring of 1849, Hochmuth came under verbal attack. The campaign against Hochmuth had begun in February of 1848, a month before the revolution began, when the Jewish community of Egerszeg forced Dr. Schiller to resign his post as director of the communal school. Apparently Schiller, who had been appointed by Hochmuth, failed to satisfy the parent body, who felt he lacked sufficient traditional religious knowledge for the position. The communal executive, a subsidiary of the County-Kehilla came to Schiller's defense and announced its intention "to furnish proof of [Schiller's] receptiveness to religious discourse and his competence in such matters." They claimed that certain members of the Jewish community had dismissed him with the intention of finding a more traditionally educated replacement "in a neighboring Polish community." Although a local tribunal ruled in his favor Schiller resigned his post. An observer lamented a situation in which "better minds are wasted...and a man like Schiller, with an open disposition, is lost because of vanity."²⁶

A year later, a similar conflict broke out in Miskolc. In this case parents and other community members voiced discontent with Hochmuth himself, expressing "their resentment as they courteously and shamelessly insulted him repeatedly."²⁷ In Egerszeg the disputants had impugned the religious demeanor of the instructor in question. In Miskolc, the issue was not simply a matter of religious background. Although some parents regarded Hochmuth as too traditional and others as too progressive, the real source of contention was Hochmuth's affinity for German language and culture. Hochmuth, his detractors alleged, had endorsed the teaching of Magyar, but maintained that German, too, was a language that Jews should learn.

Whereas the conflict in Egerszeg had been a relatively minor affair, in Miskolc the Jewish community divided into pro- and anti-Hochmuth camps, and, in January of 1849, Hochmuth was hounded from his post. Less than two months later, all of his teachers gave notice, and every Jewish school in Miskolc closed.²⁸ These incidents, beyond their religious overtones, were also attempts to overthrow the leadership of the County-Kehilla. Schiller and Hochmuth were agents of the communal elite; by ousting them, their adversaries struck a blow against what they regarded as the anti-democratic administration of leading Jewish families.

The teachers' walk-out alarmed the leaders of the Jewish community, who set aside other concerns in a singular effort to reopen the schools; they assumed direct control over school administration, appointing Bernát Vigh as interim superintendent:

There is a problem in the matter of our instructors, because already nine weeks have gone by during which children are lying around and not going to school, because all of the teachers gave notice and newer acceptable ones have not yet been found. Thus the delegates [to the County-Kehilla] reiterated, first and foremost, that they deem it most necessary to put school affairs in order and, to this end, appoint Bernát Vigh as interim superintendent.²⁹

When it became clear that they would not be able to run the schools without the assistance of a professional administrator-educator like Hochmuth, the Kehilla leaders divided over whether to invite Hochmuth to return. The debate over Hochmuth's possible return lasted for nearly a year. His supporters on the executive committee of the County-Kehilla doubted that the school could operate without a superintendent. His detractors felt that it could, provided Bernát Vigh would remain as deputy-director, or if examinations were administered by the school board. The board divided over this question, seven votes to seven, until the presiding officer, out of loyalty to Hochmuth, decided in favoring of trying to get him back.³⁰

The County-Kehilla convened a public assembly, open to all Jews in Borsod county, to discuss Hochmuth's future. At this meeting Hochmuth's supporters asserted, quite accurately, that if Hochmuth did not return, neither would most of the teachers. They warned that, "if

the director left the school permanently, the school would suffer considerably.”³¹

After extensive debate, the assembly reached agreement on five issues: first, that Hochmuth should be rehired, with the stipulation that he would not be a teacher “but only an supervisor with a smaller salary”; second, that a new school committee representing both sides would “determine mode of instruction...and have discretion over all aspects of the institution”; third, that this committee would convene public assemblies to vote on questions of comparable magnitude; fourth, that teachers of Jewish subjects need not report to this assembly, but those who taught secular subjects must do so periodically; and, finally, that “no change was to occur among the teachers...and that everything should remain as it was, except for the director [no longer being a teacher].”³²

Having decided to rehire Hochmuth, the newly formed school committee now discovered that he was uncertain if he wanted to return under the circumstances. After two weeks of negotiations, the committee reached an agreement with Hochmuth, and issued the following announcement to the next public assembly:

We deem it necessary to proceed in this matter and to request the director of the school, Abraham Hochmuth...remain on three conditions: (1) his salary should remain the same as it was (2) in matters of instruction the school board would answer to him and not vice versa and (3) he would receive a 3 year contract on condition that there is no unforeseen difficulty that would cause the school to shut down.³³

Once Hochmuth agreed to return, the other teachers followed suit. The Talmud instructor and the school attendant accepted one-year contracts at their previous salaries. Only Farkas Klein, hired to replace Hochmuth in the classroom, asked that his salary be increased.³⁴ In the spring of 1850, the schools resumed normal operation for the first time in nearly two years. Hochmuth retained his position of superintendent for another year, until the Jewish community of Szombathely, in Transdanubia, lured him away with a more lucrative offer.³⁵

By the end of 1849, Miskolc Jews had elected a new corps of communal leaders who faced the challenge of restoring the normal routine of Jewish life in Borsod county. This included three difficult

tasks: restoring the system of aid to the poor at a time when many Jews needed financial assistance; procuring kosher meat and making sure that properly trained individuals slaughtered and prepared it; and re-staffing and re-opening Jewish schools as quickly and smoothly as possible. In order to attend to these problems, it was first necessary to replenish the County-Kehilla's depleted treasury. The new executive board simply re-instated many of the pre-1848 methods of raising money: encouraging individuals to name the Kehilla as an heir, soliciting donations, and investing these donations to increase capital.

They added one new means of raising revenue.³⁶ Individuals who wanted to leave Miskolc had to pay an exit tax. When David Weiner wanted to leave, for example, he was given the choice of paying half the sum of his debts immediately to the treasury of the Kehilla, or paying the entire debt in installments of 100 forints annually.³⁷ The new leadership was able to raise several thousand forints between March and October of 1849, and began to allocate the money immediately, first and foremost, to the poor, including those in need of medical care, those who lacked money for religious needs, victims of vandalism, and itinerants. When Herman Fox, a father of three, fell sick, he was awarded six forints per month until his recovery, "because he along with his family are suffering." Religious needs, particularly the concern that all Jews have Passover matzoh, were addressed by a single statement in January of 1850:

Several hundred forints in the treasury are lying around...and are deemed good to divide them among the poor prior to the Passover Holiday, in order to obtain the habitual wheat for matzoh. Since times are uncertain...let us cover the entire amount necessary from the treasury, and distribute 40 cubic feet of wheat in the courtyard of the synagogue.³⁸

The problem of restoring ritual slaughter was more complicated. Meat shortages were compounded by a shortage of properly trained slaughterers. To make matters worse, the slaughterhouse, where all ritual slaughter in Miskolc and in the neighboring villages had taken place since the late 1820s, had been destroyed during the summer of 1849.³⁹ By the end of 1850, though, the County-Kehilla was again up and running, providing many of the services as before the revolution.

By the end of the revolution, Szemere had left Hungary, and spent the remainder of his life as an emigré in Paris. While he was absent from post-revolutionary Hungary, his conception of emancipation survived, and would be revived during the 1860s under the aegis of József Eötvös. By the summer of 1849, much of the reluctance on the part of Hungarian Liberals had evaporated and the Jews were emancipated with much less fanfare. Although the Emancipation Edict of 1849 was short-lived, the lack of resistance in 1849 would set the tone for the renewed debate over Jewish emancipation during the 1860s. In 1867, as in 1849, Hungarian Jews were granted full equality with little or no opposition.

The hardship of revolution and war, though, challenged the synergy between Szemere's vision of an emancipated Hungarian Jewry and ability of the Magyar nation to assimilate it. By the spring of 1849, this vision was validated by the unrelenting support of Hungarian Jews for the interests of nobility, county, and nation with the same fervor that Miskolc Jews had demonstrated during the 1840s. This synergy would be tested during the 1850s by the Neo-Absolutist policies of the Habsburgs during the 1850s, but would re-emerge during the 1860s.

In this regard, Habsburg policy consummated the coming of age of Miskolc and Miskolc Jewry. By the beginning of the 1850s, Miskolc was defined increasingly by its economic role as a center of regional trade and industry, and by its administrative importance as the seat of county affairs. The political autonomy indicated by its free-city status was largely incidental. The prominent and largely unimpeded presence of Jews in all facets of city life exemplified the transformation into a modern city.

By the same token, Jewish communal administration in Miskolc had ceased to rely on the sponsorship of any state agency, be it national, county, or local. Rather, the leadership of Miskolc Jewry relied on its ability to elicit the voluntary consent of its constituency, by offering a range of benefits more attractive than those offered by any state-wide Jewish movement.

Elsewhere, Jews had regarded the invitation to join the Magyar nation as a death knell to religious traditionalism. They were drawn to the Magyar cause—or wary of it—because of the belief that assimila-

tion meant religious reform. Jews in Miskolc, traditional and progressive alike, were perhaps more attuned to the potentially benign character of the obligation to assimilate in exchange for emancipation. Szemere had no radical designs to refashion Jewish religious practice and belief, and asked only that Jews incorporate the Magyar language into public discourse and encouraged them to adopt Magyar as their spoken language. Miskolc Jews acknowledged the inherent compatibility between Magyar nationalism and a commitment to traditional Judaism.

The Miskolc Jewish elite would emerge after 1849 as the preservers of the synergy between traditional Judaism and Magyar nationalism. This synergy and the dominance of the Miskolc Jewish elite would be inexorably linked after 1849, and would be tested three times over three different aspects of Jewish communal life: in 1849 over the administration of Jewish schools, in 1863 over the religious practice in Great Synagogue of Miskolc, and in a ten-year debate from 1868 to 1878 over the religious affiliation of Miskolc Jewry. In all three cases, the deciding factor would not be religious authority or preference, but the ability of the laity to impose its will on its constituents.

Notes

1 *Cultusgemeinde* p. 91 #207 (April 1848).

2 Dobrossy, *Miskolc története* IV/1, p. 19.

3 Quoted in *ibid.*, pp. 21–22.

4 *Ibid.*, IV/1 p. 67.

5 Jenő Zsoldos, *1848-1849 a magyar zsidóság életében*. (Budapest. 1948) (Translation mine).

6 Dobrossy, *Miskolc története* IV/2, p. 851.

7 Bernstein does not list Fischmann, but in July 1849, the County-Kehilla submitted a petition to the local military commander asking that Fischmann be relieved of duty. See *Protocolle der Borsod Israelitische Cultusgemeinde* [Protocol of the Borsod Israelite Religious Community] (Miskolc, 1849-1851) p. 79.

8 Gábor Klauzál, Bertalan Szemere, and Ferenc Pulszky, “A Decree Opposing Violence Against Jews” (April 3, 1848) quoted in *Magyar Zsidó Szemle* I 1884 p. 413.

9 *Ibid.*, p. 95 #215.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 95 #214 April 25, 1848.

11 *Ibid.*, #207.

- 12 Ibid., pp. 95–97 #217 (April 29, 1848).
- 13 Dobrossy, *Miskolc története* IV/1, p. 16.
- 14 *Hitközségi jegyzőkönyv* [Communal Protocol] p. 8 #22 (May 18, 1848).
- 15 Ibid., p. 4 #5 (May 7, 1848).
- 16 Dobrossy, *Miskolc története* IV/1, p. 19.
- 17 Józef Wysocki, *Együtt a szabadságért, 1848–1849: Wysocki tábornok emlékiratai* [Together for Freedom, 1848–1849: Memoirs of the Wysocki Camp] (Budapest, 1997) pp. 70–74 and 173–185.
- 18 Dobrossy, *Miskolc története* IV/1, p. 28.
- 19 Ibid., IV/2 p. 851.
- 20 Mikós Kamody, *Indul a postakocsi: 200 éves a miskolc posta* [The postal coach is setting out: 200 years of the Miskolc postal service] Miskolc, 1990. p. 101.
- 21 Ibid., p. 101.
- 22 Borsod Izraelitische Cultusgemeinde, p. 9. When counterfeiterers tried to take advantage of this situation, the County-Kehilla replaced paper ration cards, which were easy to counterfeit, with metal ones.
- 23 Ibid., p. 21. Salo Baron noted that financial hardship was a widespread for Jews across Central Europe in 1848. Baron, “Aspects of the Jewish Communal Crisis,” p. 107.
- 24 Dobrossy, *Miskolc története* IV/2, p. 852.
- 25 The following quotations are cited from Hermann, *Szemere Bertalan*, pp. 97–97. (All italics mine).
- 26 *Der Orient* no.10 (1848).
- 27 *Borsod Izraelitische Cultusgemeinde*, p. 3.
- 28 Ibid., pp. 3–4.
- 29 Ibid., p. 8.
- 30 Ibid., p. 5.
- 31 Ibid., p. 11.
- 32 Ibid., p. 82. The members of the committee were Jacob Bernstein (head rabbi) Dr. Katzender, Dr. Popper, Dr. Kis, Samuel Klein, Henrik Klein, Albert Eigner, Henrik Grunblatt, and David Groak.
- 33 Ibid., p. 24. Hochmuth was originally offered a one-year contract, but he insisted on three years.
- 34 Ibid., p. 12.
- 35 Although he left in the middle of a three-year contract, there is no record of a dispute.
- 36 There is no statistical data on Jewish emigration at this time, but anecdotal evidence suggests a substantial number of Jews left Borsod and neighboring counties en route either to Pest, a royal free city, or the new world.
- 37 Ibid., p. 15.
- 38 Ibid., p. 25.
- 39 Ibid., p. 28.

Coming of age, 1851–1878

In March 1854, the Habsburg Government enacted Law XXIII. This law dissolved the Borsod County Kehilla, deemed by the Habsburg government to be a focal point of revolutionary activity among Jews, and limited the jurisdiction of communal leaders to three aspects of communal life: religious rituals, education, and philanthropy (*Cultus*, *Shulen*, and *Cassa*). Each of these committees had to report to the district commissioner's office four times a year, and the members of the committees had to be approved and were subject to immediate and arbitrary dismissal by the commissioner's office. For Miskolc Jews, this ostensibly meant a retreat from their dominant position in county-wide Jewish affairs.²²

This was not a policy directed solely or even primarily against Jews but was part of a larger program of Habsburg Neo-Absolutism in which the Habsburg government suppressed representative political institutions not directly linked to the central government. County assemblies, the mainstay of noble influence and authority, were disbanded, and Hungary was re-divided into districts, each one administered directly from Vienna. County administration was replaced by military and civic administration, and no representative bodies on any level would retain any measure of authority.

The Habsburg government's central aim in enacting this policy was to centralize the administration of Habsburg domains, to improve the economy so as to compete with Western European states, and to quash any lingering revolutionary impulses.² Among other things, this meant creating a direct link between Vienna and regional center of

trade such as Miskolc, thereby undermining the economic leadership of Pest—the heart of Magyar nationalism and revolutionary activity—and removing the county as the fundamental organizing unit of Hungarian politics and the Hungarian economy. Hungarian Jews were to be integrated into a centralized economy by redirecting their loyalty and patriotism from the Hungarian nobility to the Habsburg Dynasty, and from Magyar to German nationalism. The latter was to be accomplished by Germanizing the Jews through state-sponsored education.

These policies ultimately accomplished their aims, but, ironically, in the opposite way than the Habsburg government intended. The Hungarian economy prospered, but regional centers of trade such as Miskolc soon became hubs of a revived county government, buoyed by the retreat of the Habsburgs from internal Hungarian affairs after 1860. The revolutionary impulses of the Hungarian populace dissipated, but through a growing loyalty to the Hungarian state and its nobility, and to Magyar nationalism.

The growing economic role of Miskolc, moreover, strengthened the ties between Jews and nobles in Borsod County. The very aspects of communal administration down to which Habsburg Neo-Absolutism had reduced Jewish communal administration—education, philanthropy, and ritual—preserved the ties between Miskolc Jewry and county nobles during the 1850s, and strengthened these ties thereafter. The National Education Fund Act of 1851 laid the basis for the rapid Magyarization of Jews in Miskolc and Borsod County; the Miskolc Jewish elite, by presiding over the implementation and administration of state-sponsored schools, controlled the most direct access to Magyar culture.

Moreover, the philanthropic organizations of Miskolc Jews, particularly the Jewish Women's Association, channeled the material prosperity generated by Habsburg economic policy into a county-wide network of charity; this further assured the dependence of smaller communities on Miskolc Jewry. Supervising Jewish rituals, particularly synagogue life, placed leading Jews in Miskolc in the powerful position of defending the Miskolc synagogue and chief rabbi from an extended polemical assault by an Ultra-Orthodox rabbi in neighboring communities; by thwarting this religious assault, the Mi-

skolc elite re-asserted the integrity of its county-wide jurisdiction and authority.

In this regard, the career of Joseph Popper was, in many ways, a metonym for the transformation of Miskolc Jewry after 1849, amidst the transition from Hungarian rule to Habsburg Neo-absolutist rule during the 1850s and back to Hungarian rule in 1860. Popper's tripartite role of communal elder, county official, and national Jewish leader marked the coming of age of Miskolc Jewry as an important voice within Hungarian Jewry, and the city of Miskolc as a hub of Magyar politics, economics, and culture.

As communal elder, Popper was a latter day Wolf Brody. Born in 1824, Popper was the son of Moricz Popper, a Jew from Prague who had immigrated to Miskolc in 1813. A prosperous merchant with the impressive pedigree of a Prague-born Jew, the elder Popper rose quickly in the ranks of the Jewish community. He solidified his place among the Jewish elite on August 26, 1840 through the marriage of Joseph to Juliana Resofski, the daughter of Jacob Resofski. In 1844, Joseph was sent to Vienna to study medicine, returning to Miskolc in early 1848.³

From 1853 to 1862, Joseph Popper headed the Education Committee of Miskolc Jewry, making him the *de facto* leader of Miskolc Jewry for a decade, like Brody had once been for decades. Popper's guiding presence on the education committee measured the seamless weaving of Magyar nationalism into the day to day rhythms of Jewish communal life.

Popper's leadership, unlike Brody's, extended beyond communal leadership in two respects: Popper became a county official and a national leader of Hungarian Jewry. In December 1856 Popper was appointed chief administrator of Miskolc's main hospital by the Habsburg's Interior Minister, thus becoming the first Miskolc Jew to hold a bureaucratic office; after the county administration was reinstated in 1860, he was appointed county chief physician. During his first year as chief administrator, the hospital cured more than 1,200 patients. He also used his connections with the Jewish community to raise substantial funds for the hospital prompting the minister to recognize him as a "great hospital builder." When county administration was restored after 1860, he was appointed county chief physician of Borsod County.⁴ As county official, Popper culminated a process that had

begun with Brody's close ties to leading Borsod County Magnates. Popper's dual role as communal leader and county official reflected the consummation of the synergy between Jewry and nobility in Borsod County, inadvertently aided by Habsburg policy. Popper thus represents a fusion of county and Jewish communal leadership into a single individual.

During the 1860s, moreover, Popper emerged as a national leader of Hungarian Jewry. In 1868, he was selected to serve as secretary of the Jewish Congress. He was among the few participants who advocated unity and diversity in an age of growing schism and rigidity. Popper's role as voice of moderation and compromise at the National Jewish Congress was indicative of Miskolc Jewry's limited connection to Orthodoxy or Neology. Miskolc Jewry largely remained aloof from the ideological dimension of this conflict for nearly two decades. Only when the conflict spilled into Borsod County itself did the Miskolc Jewish elite react, and then only to preserve the non-involvement and non-partisanship of Borsod County Jews. In general, the ideological struggle between traditionalists and progressives was largely arbitrated in Miskolc and Borsod County by lay rather than rabbinic leaders.

Popper's view would reverberate in Miskolc for more than a decade after the Congress disbanded in 1869, as Miskolc Jews vacillated between Orthodox and Neolog positions until finally tepidly choosing Orthodoxy. The extended debate during the late 1860s and 1870s over whether to affiliate with Orthodoxy, Neolog, Status Quo, or not to affiliate was eventually resolved with a general agreement to disagree and with no real commitment to any state-wide Jewish movement. This, as it turned out, was symptomatic of a fluid traditionalism that had characterized Miskolc Jewry for decades.

The checkered legacy of Habsburg Neo-Absolutism

While suppressing communal activities of nobles and Jews, Habsburg economic policy encouraged and supported the commercial ventures of individual nobles and Jews. By the beginning of the 1860s, the economic alliance between Jews and nobles had expanded beyond commercial contracts between individual Jews and nobles to include

joint commercial and industrial ventures that at times involved dozens of Jewish and noble businessmen. By allowing Jews to lease land, the Habsburg allowed this alliance to extend from urban to more rural venues.

Under Habsburg policy, Hungary was incorporated into the imperial customs union, a reversal of a decades-old policy, allowing goods to flow more easily and more cheaply between Hungary and other Habsburg domains. In and around Miskolc, the growth of local industry marked the effort of Habsburg economic policy to stimulate the economy of the hinterland towns such as Miskolc, largely to undermine the economic influence and importance of Pest.

An important step in this direction was the integration of towns like Miskolc into a regional trade network through the construction of new railroad lines. Prior to 1850 railroads in Hungary were virtually non-existent, and entirely absent from the hinterland regions. The Pest–Kassa highway, the only major thoroughfare connecting Miskolc with other commercial hubs, was primitive even by mid-nineteenth century standards; travelers often commented on the poor quality of this road and the difficulty of even ordinary inter-city excursions.⁵

This situation changed at the end of the 1850s. In March 1859 the Miskolc–Debrecen railway line opened; in August, 1860, the Miskolc–Kassa line opened; and, by the end of 1861, the Pest–Hatvan and Hatvan–Miskolc lines were also completed. In short, by the end of 1861, Miskolc was connected by rail to major cities in all directions. In addition it was now possible to travel by rail from Miskolc to Pest with, at most, only one change of trains. Miskolc was also the main stop for those en route to Pest from Debrecen, Kassa, the Carpathian region and Transylvania. Once an isolated regional center at the gateway to a frontier region, Miskolc became a commercial hub for an increasingly expansive region.⁶

With the completion of the railroad lines, Miskolc grew at an accelerated rate. Although overshadowed by the far more rapid growth of Pest 1850 and 1890, Miskolc was one of seven Hungarian towns that increased by more than 80% during this period, and among only five that had reached 50,000 residents by 1869.⁷ As István Dobrossy noted: “The industrial boom in the two decades between the collapse of the war of independence and the compromise resulted in consider-

able change in the coal mining in Borsod County especially around Diósgyőr-Miskolc and Ózd... The waves of railroad construction intensified the demand for coal..." The steadiest area of growth was in Miskolc-Diósgyőr, where there were more than 600 coal miners by 1867.⁸

The rapid growth of Miskolc was instrumental in the town's economic growth, including a growing Jewish presence in crafts, industry, and land-leasing. Jewish artisans had thrived in Miskolc during the Revolution of 1848–49, benefitting from the dissolution of guild privileges by the revolutionary government. In addition, the *honvéd* had given Jewish tailors and shoemakers a guaranteed contract.⁹ The reinstatement of the guild system by Habsburgs after the war briefly obstructed the free entrance of Jews into crafts. Recognizing the economic potential of these Jewish organizations, though, the Vienna government reiterated the revolutionary government's prohibition of guild privileges: "No one shall be excluded from the exercise of commerce and crafts because of his religion, nationality, birth, or parentage."¹⁰

The number of Jewish artisans increased accordingly. By 1855, the Jewish guild exceeded 80 members, including white and red tanners, wax-chandlers, cobblers, soap-makers, button makers, bakers, painters, table-makers, furriers, and pipe-makers. At times, equal treatment under Habsburg law worked to the disadvantage of Jewish artisans. Many of them languished along with their Christian counterparts under the strict regulations imposed by the Habsburg government. An 1852 decree, for example, forbade gambling and reveling after 10 p.m., and held masters accountable for the behavior of their apprentices and journeymen.¹¹

The more entrepreneurial Jewish artisans who, buoyed by the economic expansion of the 1850s, expanded their enterprises rapidly and emerged as a nascent coterie of Jewish industrialists. Most notable among these were the Furman brothers, who founded the first brick factory in Miskolc in 1855, which, by the 1870s, was the largest industrial venture in Miskolc, producing 140,000 bricks every two weeks in 1873. Also noteworthy was Moricz Weisz, who expanded the rum factory he had founded in 1844 and added a cotton factory by 1855. After 1860, these and other Jewish industrialists played a prominent

role in forming partnerships with industrialists from the upper ranks of the nobility.

It was the growing involvement of Jews in the rural economy, though, that reflected the way in which Habsburg economic policy—in this case, the land-reform—laid the foundation for joint ventures between Jews and nobles during the 1850s and thereafter.¹² In Borsod County, Jews had owned and leased land even before 1848. According to statistical data gathered in 1848, 71 Jews were classified as cattle ranchers and landowners (*jószágbirtokos és földesúr*) at a time when none of the other thirteen counties surveyed reported even one.¹³ Yet as Tamás Csíki noted, during the 1850s and 1860s the number of Jews acquiring land escalated rapidly, exceeding the overall rate of land acquisition.¹⁴

The Habsburg's land reform aided upstart Jewish agro-businessmen. Much of the land-acquisition among Jews was in the form of a *General Pachtung*, or general leasing, in which partnerships leased as much as 20–30,000 hectares of land. More typical were individuals or small groups who purchased the estates of mid-range holders, primarily in the region between the Danube and the Tisza. So conspicuous was Jewish speculation that, in 1853, the Vienna government forbade Jews from doing it.¹⁵ Imperial legislation notwithstanding, Jews continued to speculate, enough so that in 1858, a writer for a Hungarian agricultural journal, the *Village Farmer*, commented: "What kind of system is now in vogue in Hungary? None in the legal sense—all there is anymore is the Jewish lease."¹⁶ Once Jews again were allowed to lease real estate in 1860, the trend continued unabated into the twentieth century.¹⁷

The growing number of Jewish land-holders expanded the economic relationship between Jews and nobles. There was a general acceptance among noblemen that Jewish leaseholders played an indispensable role in the modernization of agriculture, "often as merchant, creditor, and leaseholder all in one."¹⁸ Many Jews who speculated in land had been partners of large landowners, on whose behalf they often acquired the land, or were from families that had worked for well-endowed noble families.¹⁹

At times, the growing number of Jews involved in land-leasing created the basis for joint ventures between Jewish and noble entrepre-

neurs. The largest of these was the cattle herding venture. In 1851, for example, the investors in the largest cattle-herding enterprise included 63 Jews and 45 nobles.²⁰ In the absence of noble-dominated county administration and county-wide Jewish administration during the 1850s, such joint ventures became the medium for county-wide cooperation between the Jewish and noble elites. After county government was restored in 1860, such joint ventures were aided by open endorsement from the county assembly.

While designed to stimulate economic growth through the success of individual entrepreneurs, however, the economic policies of the Habsburgs inadvertently helped the Miskolc Jewish maintain its hold over Borsod County Jewry, despite the elimination of the County-Kehilla. The newly emerging Jewish industrial elite was comprised almost entirely of leading Jewish families from Miskolc. These Jewish families remained the principle supporters of all facets of Jewish communal life in Borsod County for decades.

The National Education Fund Act

The material prosperity of the Miskolc Jewish elite was complimented by its preeminent position in Jewish communal affairs, first and foremost, by its role in implementing the National Education Fund Act of 1851. This act commuted the penalty imposed on Hungarian Jewry by the commander of Habsburg forces at the close of the Hungarian War of Independence as a punishment for Hungarian Jewish support for the Hungarian cause, into a fund that was to be used exclusively for improving Jewish education. This satisfied those who wanted to punish the Jews for supporting the revolution, while putting the money to productive use.²¹

The impact of this act for Miskolc Jewry was initially fiscal and cultural, and eventually religious as well. The new state-wide emphasis on education reform elevated Jewish schools to a position of supreme importance in communal affairs. In turn, the education committee emerged by the spring of 1857 as the *de facto* leadership of the Jewish community, and the newfound domain of elite Jewish families. Nearly three-fifths of the communal budget went toward education.²²

By providing state funding, however, the act reduced the financial burden of supporting Jewish schools and, by extension, the cost of Magyarization. In 1856, for example, Miskolc Jewry spent less money on communal schools than it had spent in 1846, and only 25% more than it had spent on schools in 1836. After 1860, when the source of state support transferred from the Habsburg government in Vienna to the Hungarian government in Pest, the cost of education increased steadily and significantly every year. The cost of education in 1861 was more than five times that of 1856.²³

From the outset, moreover, the new schools became an important vehicle for the Magyarization of Miskolc and Borsod County Jewry. The requirement of German language instruction in these schools prompted growing resentment among Jews toward the Habsburg government. Throughout the 1850s, the members of the education commission debated the balance between German and Magyar language instruction in the school curriculum. Increasingly, the school committee tended toward Magyar.²⁴

When the switch to Magyar became official in October 1860, the committee acknowledged that “the Magyar language has for some time been the language of instruction in the schools of Miskolc and in other Borsod County communities as well.”²⁵ In this regard, the Miskolc schools diverged from the conventionally posited course of Jewish acculturation in Hungary during the second half of the nineteenth century. Victor Karady has suggested that the turn to Magyar was a form of “secondary acculturation” following a period of Germanization. In Miskolc and Borsod County, the trend toward German language and culture was already being curtailed during the 1850s, and was severely curtailed after 1860.

Eventually, the National Education Fund Act had a profound impact on the religious mentality of Hungarian Jewry, owing largely to the religious debate that preceded its legislation. In order to work out the specifics of this act, the monarchy solicited proposals from lay and religious leaders from within Hungarian Jewry. Two opposing proposals were submitted. One was submitted by Meir Eisenstadt, the rabbi of the Orthodox community of Ungvár. The other was submitted by Frigyes Grosz, a progressive rabbi from Nagyvárad, and later reiterated by Leopold Löw, the *de facto* leader of the Neolog movement.

From the outset, the essential difference between the conservative and progressive views of educational reform was not the inclusion of a secular component per se, but rather who would supervise this change in the education system: the state or the Jewish communities themselves? Rabbis or laity? Eisenstadt asked the government not to force Jews to attend secular schools which, he argued, would violate their religious freedom. Instead, he suggested that Jews be allowed to attend the school of their choice regardless of its secular component and fulfill the state's secular education requirement by taking a single comprehensive placement exam, which could be administered by local Jewish communal leaders. Grosz asked that the state take a more active role in requiring all Jews to pursue a secular education, in a Jewish school whenever possible.²⁶

Between these conflicting views emerged a third view that suggested a middle-ground position. In May 1851, Abraham Hochmuth completed his treatise on Jewish education in which he re-conceived on a state-wide level the educational innovations he had successfully introduced in Miskolc during the 1840s. For Hochmuth, the specific components of the curriculum were secondary to the manner in which these subjects were taught. He spoke out vehemently, for example, against the rote method used to teach Bible and rabbinic texts: "This should not be the system of studying the Bible; it should be studied by means of applying grammar and the basic concepts of the text. Therefore, it should not necessarily contain the entire text but selected passages which give the sequential meaning of the Bible to the child."²⁷ At the same time, he disagreed with conservatives who thought that teaching religion as part of the curriculum weakened Hungarian Jewry, arguing instead that

the strength and weakness of Judaism is not to be determined by this special course of study...the study of religion in these modern times rests upon the pattern that the parents and the teachers jointly must set for the child to follow. They must set an example by actual deeds rather than by specific courses given in the school.²⁸

By distinguishing curricular and day-to-day administrative issues from teacher training, Hochmuth combined elements of conservative progressive proposals. Like Eisenstadt and other religious conserva-

tives, Hochmuth suggested that Jewish communities be allowed to supervise their own religious affairs, provided their students consistently met the standards for secular education. Like Löw and the progressives, Hochmuth advocated closely supervised teacher training. With regard to the Education Fund itself, he suggested that individual Jewish communities be allotted money to improve their existing schools, while teacher training institutes be established to improve the quality of instruction in these schools.

Hochmuth's proposal was accepted by the Habsburg government and became the basis for the implementation of the National Education Fund Act. The impact of the new education program affected Miskolc Jews differently than other Jewish communities. Elsewhere, the National Education Fund Act was simply an externally imposed array of schools reforms. In Miskolc, the reforms imposed by the state during the 1850s had already been implemented locally by the Jewish community.

At first glance, the significance of the National Education Fund on Hungarian Jewry was the religious protest it elicited from traditional Jews. As Michael Silber has argued, the education policies of the 1850s were an important step in the crystallization of Hungarian Orthodoxy, and consequently in its conflict with more progressive Jews.²⁹ In this regard, it affected Jews in Miskolc and Borsod County differently than Jews elsewhere in Hungary. Hochmuth, after all, had already introduced the educational innovations entailed in this act in Miskolc a decade, and, by 1849 throughout Borsod County. Thus the new education policy was seen by Borsod County Jewry as a benign state endorsement of innovations already sanctioned by lay and rabbinic leaders.

Philanthropy: the domain of the Jewish Women's Association

The willingness of Miskolc Jewry to distinguish between religious and non-religious dimensions of the National Education Fund Act was equally visible with respect to philanthropy. The material prosperity of the 1850s, coupled with the reduced costs of communal education,

allowed Miskolc Jewry to expand its eleemosynary activities. Until 1855, these activities were confined largely to Miskolc. Following the Cholera Epidemic of 1855, however, Miskolc Jewry expanded its philanthropic activities, first to those communities hardest hit by the epidemic, and then to all communities who applied for charitable support. By the beginning of the 1860s, the philanthropic network restored the dependence of Borsod County Jews on Miskolc Jewry, in effect, a reversal of the Habsburg curtailment of the county-wide *Ke-hilla*.³⁰

After 1860, this dependence increased substantially as the charitable activities of Miskolc Jewry were taken over by the Miskolc Jewish Women's Association. From the outset, the Women's Association was primarily a philanthropic organization, distributing money, food, and clothing to the poor. Much like the Vienna Jewish Women's Association, which was founded in 1860, the members of the Miskolc organization devoted themselves primarily to charitable activities: supplying indigent Jews with food, wood, and medicine.³¹ The Miskolc organization's first sustained philanthropic project was providing clothing to indigent Jewish children.

The Miskolc organization was made up almost exclusively of women who were affluent enough to afford domestic servants and who belonged to a prestigious Miskolc lineage. Half of the founding members came from families that had served the community for a half-century or more by 1862. As of 1848, the leader Hani Ferenc's sister-in-law, Zetti Frank Doman, had three servants. Beti Burger (b. Beti Lusztig in 1820) had two servants. Fani Sarman Pollack (b. Fani Sarman in 1803) had two servants. Sally Brody Klein (b. Miskolc 1823) had one servant. Julia Weiszman Muller (b. Miskolc in 1826) had three children and one servant. Hani Ferenc was exceptional in that she was a relative newcomer to Miskolc. She had migrated from Pest in 1845, itself a measure of prestige. By 1848 she had one servant.³²

The assistance of domestic servants freed these women from the time-consuming tasks of maintaining a home and raising children. This gave these and other affluent women the time and energy to join a women's organization that less affluent women simply did not have. In addition, for women with newfound leisure time who were ex-

cluded from the workplace and public life, women's societies provided a way of channeling skill and energy. As William Toll noted: "With larger segments of their lives to devote to themselves, women could join together to cultivate their own interests."³³

The membership of the women's association increased slowly after 1862 owing to an annual membership fee that discouraged all but the most affluent women from joining. This fee could be paid annually or as a onetime lifetime membership fee. The membership reached 52 in 1867 and 142 by 1876. After 1878, the membership increased more rapidly to over 800 by 1921, indicating the growing affluence of the community, or at least the growth of the communal elite.

The formation of the Women's Society, moreover, completed the process of institutional development that had begun four decades earlier with the Burial Society. Like the other organizations, the Women's Society combined the best interests of Jewish and civic life by helping to promote morality and religious piety while aiding in the smooth administration of communal life. In this sense, the Women's Society was more than an extension of communal life; it combined the ideals and functions of Jewish voluntary societies with the empowering aims of Christian women societies; just as the Jewish artisans guild combined elements of Jewish and Christian organizations.³⁴

The synagogue debate and the restoration of county-wide authority

By the beginning of the 1860s, expanding communal control over education and philanthropy were instrumental in restoring much of the influence and authority over Borsod County Jewry that the Miskolc Jewish elite had ostensibly lost during the 1850s. This newly re-acquired *de facto* influence was tested during the 1860s by a protracted debate over the character of the new Great Synagogue. The rhetoric of this debate largely addressed religious issues, notably the character and extent of change allowed in the synagogue service. An ever-present sub-text of this debate, and ultimately its key issue, was whether communal leaders outside of Borsod County could supersede the authority of Miskolc Jewry in county matters.

The debate over the synagogue began two years before construction on the proposed synagogue started. An initial complaint submitted in 1853 to the leadership of the Jewish community alleged that the communal leadership had not been elected but had been appointed by the “exaggerated favoritism” of Habsburg officials in Upper Hungary. The complaint alleged that the absence of an elected leadership had allowed those in positions of authority to apportion the meat tax unevenly and in a way that favored the richest stratum of the Jewish community. In 1855, when construction on the new synagogue began, the ritual committee set up a separate fund to cover the cost of construction. This fund was to be supported by donations and by channeling revenue from other communal activities. A second complaint against “the questionable use of the communal treasury in this fashion,” accused the leadership of using communal funds crookedly, and called for the election of a new communal board.³⁵

Part of this dissent undoubtedly arose from the fact that, since 1850, two prominent figures had been reduced to lesser roles in the community. Gyula Resofski, president of the Jewish community from 1847 until the end of 1849, held no communal office from December 1849 through March 1860. It is possible that, owing to his support for the Hungarian Revolution, he had been ostracized by Habsburg officials along with other revolutionary figures. In addition, Moses Ezekiel Fischmann, beloved chief rabbi of Miskolc and Borsod County since the late 1830s, was largely absent from communal deliberation from October 1849 through March 1860. As he had been a chaplain in the Honvéd during revolution, he, too, may have been ostracized from communal leadership. Once Resofski and Fischmann returned to positions of leaders in 1860, these complaints were withdrawn.³⁶

A more vitriolic dispute followed soon after. This dispute was waged across the Sajó River, which was the front line in a conflict between Hillel Lichtenstein of Szikszó and Moses Ezekiel Fischmann of Miskolc. Until 1863 these two traditionalists had shared a mutual respect. When Fischmann endorsed the newly completed Miskolc synagogue, his colleague across the river launched a vicious campaign against him that lasted for two years, thus, revealing the lines of Orthodox rigidity taking shape across the Sajó.³⁷

By the early 1860s Miskolc Jews had begun construction on a synagogue that was modeled after the newly constructed Dohány Street synagogue in Pest. For affluent communal leaders, an impressive edifice was no longer sufficient. Rather, the style of the time demanded that the new synagogue be a *Chorschule*, or choral synagogue; in other words, it would be designed so that a professionally trained cantor could lead the service accompanied by an organ and a professional choir. This decision evoked mixed reactions from Jewish communal leaders, some of whom regarded a *Chorschule* as a Reform innovation even of the service itself conformed to Jewish law. Communal leaders asked Moses Ezekiel Fischmann to rule on whether or not such a synagogue was permissible.

For Fischmann, this was his latest effort to remain true to his own moderately traditional beliefs. Since his arrival in Miskolc thirty years earlier, his operating principle had been to allow any change not specifically proscribed by the *Shulchan Aruch*, a sixteenth century law code that was regarded as a definitive judicial precedent for Ashkenazic Jews. He had allowed sermons in the vernacular—regarded by some traditionalists as a Reform innovation—since the 1830s. He had also persuaded his congregants to raise the barrier between the men's and women's section, when he deemed it too low.³⁸ Prior to the synagogue controversy, Fischmann's approach had not only maintained harmony in his congregation, it had earned him the praise of his traditional colleagues, even from Hillel Lichtenstein of Szikszó, one of the leaders of Ultra-Orthodoxy, who, in 1862, referred to Fischmann as "the elderly *Ga'on*, *Av Bet Din* of the holy congregation of Miskolc."³⁹

When the dispute over the new synagogue arose, Fischmann resorted to the same approach. Using the code as a guide, he allowed the congregation to construct the *Chorschule*, sanctioned the eventual hiring of a cantor accompanied by a choir, and allowed the congregants to move the *Bima* to the front of the sanctuary. He refused, however, to allow the use of an organ on Saturday morning, which was a clear violation of the Sabbath. His ruling satisfied his congregants and, for the moment, the matter subsided.

In May of 1863, several months after the new synagogue was completed and services were held there, the community decided to hire an assistant director, who would double as school director. Fischmann

endorsed the candidacy of Dr. Klein. On May 4, as part of the Saturday morning service, Klein addressed the students who had recently completed their exams. Although he showed Orthodox tendencies in his address and his manner, he nonetheless quieted the concerns of the progressives and was hired as the new preacher (*Prädiger*).⁴⁰

During the summer of 1863, Lichtenstein, upon discovering that Fischmann not only endorsed the *Chorschule* but prayed and preached there, condemned the synagogue and Fischmann and devised a plan to disrupt the service. He arranged for one of his disciples to deliver the sermon in the new synagogue on the eight day of *Sukkot*. When the time came for the cantor and youth choir to continue the service, the guest rabbi signaled them to leave, creating a momentary disorder. At that moment, the guest rabbi launched into a diatribe from the pulpit against the synagogue and Fischmann. He was eventually escorted to his seat in the congregation but not before disrupting the service for several minutes. "Thus," lamented an observer, "we discover the sprouting of fanatics in our holy community."⁴¹ Several months later Lichtenstein issued a ban on the synagogue and, speaking out against it publicly in the open market of Szikszó, forbade anyone to set foot in it, even for reasons other than praying.⁴² He also co-opted the support of one of his disciples, Joachim Schreiber, the rabbi of Szentpéter in Borsod County.

More disturbing to Miskolc Jews were Lichtenstein's diatribes against Fischmann himself, who, it was assumed was pious enough to escape such invectives: "Shocking is the mouth with which this unworthy porter has the impudence to rail against our Chief Rabbi Fischmann, a pious old man of 70 years who would cast no man to Neology. The vulgarity which is leveled against our rabbi in the synagogue in Szikszó I cannot repeat."⁴³ By December of 1863, Lichtenstein had found supporters in Miskolc. He convinced a respected rabbi residing there not to attend his son's wedding because it was taking place in the *Chorschule*.⁴⁴

At the end of 1863 the Miskolc communal leaders responded to Lichtenstein's allegations of impropriety. Fischmann himself was reluctant to engage his rabbinic colleague, since it was not in his nature to engage in polemics, and he left it to the lay leaders to handle the situation. The correspondent from *Ben Chananja* wrote:

It is to you, therefore, leaders of this great community! To you, the intelligent and well-to-do class of the community! Now is the time to take a stand against the spread of heterodoxy, against the enemy of light, for you to call on one another, shirking no financial sacrifice.⁴⁵

Initially, the efforts of the laity were unsuccessful, and, in February of 1864, they asked Dr. Meisel, the chief rabbi of Pest, to intervene on their behalf by submitting a complaint to the lord regent. Meisel, although sympathetic to their situation, declined to “involve himself as Pest rabbi in the affairs of communities on the other side of the Danube.”⁴⁶ As it turned out, his intervention was, for the moment, unnecessary. Lichtenstein had become embroiled in another conflict and his disciple, the rabbi of Szentpéter, although continuing his verbal abuse of Fischmann and Miskolc Jews, never issued a ban on Fischmann or Miskolc. In retrospect, the rabbis in Pest and Szentpéter were reluctant to violate the county hierarchy, be it as an outsider in the case of Meisel, or as an underling in the case of the Szentpéter rabbi, whose community was a subsidiary of Miskolc, which put him, in effect, under the command of Fischmann.

The situation, though, continued to deteriorate, and quarrels among Jews in the synagogue and the marketplace became more common. At the end of February 1864, the tenor of the dispute changed, when it was alleged that several members of the current communal council, who had been elected three years earlier, had been embezzling from the communal treasury. This allegation turned out to be unfounded, but not before communal leaders called for a new election of officers on May 30, 1864.

As the election drew nearer, it became clear that it would be a referendum not only for the future of the synagogue, but for the religious future of the community. The pro-synagogue, pro-Fischmann party campaigned on a platform of “eliminating the germinating cells of zealotry,” and “preventing the fanatics of Szikszó and Ujhely from smuggling their followers onto the council,” while their opponents reiterated the slanders from Szikszó and Szentpéter. The latter, assuming that less affluent individuals tended more often toward a more traditional outlook, campaigned for an extension of voting privileges to a larger portion of the community. In the end, the moderates won by a landslide, with David Groak—the main financier of the synagogue construction

project—elected to the presidency, along with three others who were “inclined toward moderate progress.”⁴⁷ In the aftermath of the election, the new council, disturbed by the chaos that surrounded the election, made two modifications to the communal by-laws. They increased the number of representatives by 24, and, in accordance with *Kehilla* Ordinance number IX of 1836, decreed that all subsequent elections would take place only in an orderly fashion.⁴⁸

With a new mandate, the newly elected council began a concerted effort to settle intra-communal disputes peacefully and respectfully. Sporadic incidents, though, continued. While most of the disputes were couched as discontent regarding the synagogue, they concerned other matters with increasing frequency. For example, when a group of dissatisfied teachers asked for a salary increase in February of 1866, they included in their petition a complaint against the *Chorschule*.⁴⁹

Despite the triumph of the pro-*Chorschule* party, negotiations continued between the more traditional and more progressive elements in the community, who, on April 20, 1866, finally reached a six-part compromise regarding the future of the synagogue:

- 1) The synagogue would henceforth be called the “New Temple” not the *Chorschule*
- 2) The Cantor will be called *Vorbeter*
- 3) The *Vorbeter*’s prayer shawl must not be rolled up, but must hang down to his knees
- 4) The choir may continue to perform, but all choir members must wear the same prayer shawl as the *Vorbeter*, and must bow at the proper points in the service
- 5) There can be no restrictions on praying aloud
- 6) [Vienna Cantor Solomon] Sulzer’s “Song of Zion” will be examined and allowed as part of the service as long as it is not deemed overly gentle.⁵⁰

It is indeed remarkable that the Miskolc Jewish community was able to reach this compromise amidst the growing state-wide debate over religious affiliation. In retrospect, this compromise presaged the determination and, ultimately, the ability of Miskolc Jewry to remain largely aloof from and unaffected by the public debate between Orthodoxy and Neology.

The scope of the conflict and the nature of the compromise illustrated the limited extent to which religious disputes affected commu-

nal life. The conflict remained, for the most part, inside the synagogue walls and within the dynamics of intra-communal and inter-communal relations. Although ostensibly a conflict between rabbinic figures, it was mediated by the interests of lay leaders. The passive role of Fischmann reflected the degree to which rabbis had ceased to be dominant communal leaders and had become communal servants who relied on their lay employers for assistance. This rabbinic passivity was well understood by Fischmann, who had deferred to his laity for more than three decades.

Nor did he question this arrangement. Explaining his own strategy for resolving intra-congregational disputes, Fischmann freely admitted that, “I stand off, keep silent, and wait to see whether or not a majority of my congregants will opt for them.”⁵¹ Like Fischmann, a growing number of Hungarian rabbis, across denominational lines, were salaried employees of their community; even prominent rabbinic figures were at times beholden to the support of lay leaders to insure their role in communal affairs. Lichtenstein’s inability to oppose the new synagogue, moreover, was the result of the county being the fundamental organizing unit of Hungarian Jewry. While less than twenty miles upriver from Miskolc, he could not extend his influence across the county line.

Eötvös’ paradigm: emancipation and the affiliation debate

The ability of Miskolc Jewry to withstand a challenge from a neighboring county, moreover, dovetailed with a key element of Jewish emancipation in Hungary. As in 1849, the Emancipation Edict of 1867 removed disabilities on native-born and naturalized Hungarian Jews. This did not mean that all Jews in post-emancipation were equal to each other. Emancipation welcomed Jews into the fundamentally hierarchical world of mainstream Hungarian society. By incorporating Jews into mainstream politics, moreover, the Emancipation Edict extended the right to vote only to those Jews who met the minimum tax requirement. Emancipation thus re-affirmed an age-old Jewish communal hierarchy cementing the alliance between elite Jewish and noble families.

Jews gained access to the mainstream according to their own wealth and status. For affluent Jews, therefore, emancipation meant access to the ranks of the nobility; indeed, 350 Jewish families were ennobled in Hungary after 1868.⁵² Like the disparity between nobles and non-nobles, and between magnates and lesser nobles, the disparity between elite and ordinary Jewish families remained intact. The Jewish communal elite that had dominated for over a century joined with their noble partners to form the enfranchised public, while most Jews and non-nobles still could not participate in municipal, county or state politics.⁵³

The Emancipation Edict, moreover, implicitly acknowledged the coexistence of multiple religious views within Hungarian Jews. Eötvös, the driving force behind emancipation during the 1860s, had long since rejected the notion that traditional religious observance was an impediment to Jews participating in a larger society. He rejected this claim on religious and social grounds. To those who argued that Judaism was inherently anti-Christian, he claimed that such a conclusion could only be sustained by an overly narrow examination of Jewish law:

Even if we find a few verses in their holy books that bring them against citizenship, it is not possible to rely more justly on the books generally favorable outlook?... If we only want to arrive at the impossible position that the Jews limit their religion only to these few verses and blindly cite the words of god only when they lead to hatred, and presume that, when the words of god counsel love, as the law arises in the same vein as the leanings of our heart and human nature, that Jews do not cite as authoritative the same religion!⁵⁴

Eötvös regarded the distinct religious behavior of Jews as typical in a mixed population of Catholics and Protestants:

There are those who claim that the Jews, because of their particular rituals, cannot participate in Christians meals—this is one of the more impassioned reasons cited by opponents of citizenship. If, however, in a land like ours, where followers of the pope and adherents of the reformation have lived together for several hundred years, where it has not occurred to anyone that unity is unrealizable because the religion of the former (Catholics) requires them to fast on certain days thus barring its adherents from breaking bread

with their protestant comrades nearly one-third of the year—can Jewish dietary restrictions prevent the possibility of unity between Jews and Christians?⁵⁵

In this regard, Miskolc Jewry was a living example of Eötvös' notion of religious pluralism. This, along with the continued leadership of the Miskolc Jewish elite, insulated Miskolc Jews from the growing radicalism of Jewish life during the 1860s. Paving the way for half-century of stability—internal and external—under the dualist monarchy was no simple task, particularly after 1868. The ability of Miskolc Jews to compromise at a time of rising tensions within Hungarian Jewry anticipated more than a decade of indecision regarding religious affiliation.

This period of indecision began in the immediate aftermath of the Emancipation Edict of 1867. Eötvös, Minister of Culture and Education, was a devoted Catholic, a staunch defender of religion in the face of growing liberal secularism, and a believer in the French Consistorial system as the best way for the state to manage religious affairs without impeding individuals or communities from practicing their religion. With these beliefs in mind, Eötvös asked the various religious denominations in Hungary to form national synods, which would, under state supervision, manage and oversee the religious affairs of its constituency.⁵⁶ Acknowledging the divisions within Hungarian Jewry, Eötvös asked Jewish leaders to convene a congress in order to reach some sort of consensus regarding the supervision of the religious affairs of Hungarian Jewry.

The mutual hostility within Hungarian Jewry was so intense, and the points of contention so sharp, that even convening this congress turned out to be a tumultuous affair, to say the least. When Orthodox leaders saw the possibility of the Neolog delegation determining the decisions of the congress, most Orthodox delegates refused to participate. When the congress eventually announced its plan for the administration of Jewish affairs, the Orthodox leaders refused to recognize the congress as a legitimate representative voice of Hungarian Jewry.⁵⁷

The head of the Miskolc delegation to the congress and the congress' recording secretary was Joseph Popper. Himself a moderate traditionalist, Popper was among those who tried to reach an equitable settlement between traditionalists and progressives. Although

listed among the latter, he repeatedly campaigned for the formation of a center party, insisting that either the Jews themselves or Baron Eötvös should form one.⁵⁸ Popper's efforts to this end were unsuccessful.

Several months later, Orthodox leaders petitioned Baron Eötvös for permission to organize a separate synod, arguing that the religious pronouncements of the Neolog Jews—now known as Congress Jews—obstructed the religious freedom of Orthodox Jews. Eötvös agreed, and, under his recommendation, the state recognized a second Jewish synod for Hungarian Jewry. Thus, by the end of 1870, Hungarian Jewry had been officially divided into two state-recognized religious denominations: Orthodoxy and Neology. At this point, Orthodox and Neolog leaders assumed that all Jewish communities would affiliate with one camp or the other.

To the dismay of both there were communities and congregations for whom neither Orthodoxy nor Neology was an acceptable alternative. A year after the state recognized Orthodoxy as a second synod, representatives of communities and congregations who did not wish to choose between the two camps approached Baron Eötvös and petitioned for the state to recognize a third Jewish denomination. Because the justification of this third alternative was the right of Jews to practice Judaism according to the pre-1868 status quo, that is, without having to choose between Orthodoxy and Neology, this third denomination was designated the Status Quo Ante movement.⁵⁹

Prominent among these communities was Miskolc, whose leaders simply could not agree on a suitable course of action. While Miskolc Jewry did not affiliate with the Status Quo, Miskolc embodied the mentality of the movement: a commitment to the fluid combination of tradition and progress that had marked Miskolc Jewry for decades. By the end of the nineteenth century this commitment would crystallize in the formation of a separate Status Quo congregation within the Jewish community of Miskolc.⁶⁰

From 1865 to 1878, then, Miskolc Jews refrained from affiliating with the newly forming Orthodox party. The decision not to commit and the ability to resist pressure to join one of the larger movements was facilitated by certain characteristics particular to communities that remained uncommitted. First, Miskolc was one of the few larger provincial towns that had a traditional and not a Neolog majority, the

other two being Pozsony—which was in many ways a exceptional case—and Debrecen. Miskolc was large enough to house more than one congregation, and allow those in the minority to maintain their own synagogue and school without undermining the financial stability of the Jewish community.

Second, although traditional, the Jews of Miskolc were alienated from Orthodoxy as this party fell increasingly under the leadership of its ultra-orthodox wing.⁶¹ The Jews of Miskolc considered themselves traditional and had little affinity for Reform Judaism, but regarded Ultra-Orthodox Judaism as overly militant and ideological. In this sense, Miskolc was a good example of what Viktor Karady described as Western as opposed to Eastern Hungarian Orthodoxy:

The east–west division of orthodoxy largely corresponded to the contrast between Jews of Galician, Bukovinian, and Moravian extraction, and had to do with initial levels of literacy, with the nature of the rabbinic tradition, with differential access to and influence of the *haskalah*, with initial life styles—especially the absence of an integrated *shtetl* culture in the West—with the degree of early embourgeoisement, and, last but not least, with the presence of Hasidic communities. Thus, the pervasive opposition between eastern and western Jewry, going well beyond ethnic origins, can be formulated in sociological terms.⁶²

For ten years they wavered, until finally joining with Orthodox in 1878. Although formally an Orthodox community, Miskolc's protracted non-commitment anticipated the tepid connection with the larger Orthodox movement. This outlook was woven into the newly affiliated community's 1878 statutes.⁶³

Officially, the community affirmed its commitment to Orthodoxy:

The Orthodox Israelites living in the vicinity of the city of Miskolc, have established, by virtue of these statutes...a sanctified, uniform, indivisible autonomous Orthodox community by the his royal highness' order number 26,915 of October 22, 1871, establish a community with the aim of preserving and sustaining all of its institutions; and, employing and paying its servants that are needed for the Israelite community according to the laws circumscribed in the *Shulchan Aruch*. The community has no political association.⁶⁴

All Jews in Miskolc, moreover, were required to affiliate:

With respect to the communal members' ability to partake in its rights, every permanent resident of Miskolc is obligated to enroll in the autonomous Israelite Orthodox community; the enrolled members together with their families constitute the Miskolc aut. Orth. Isr. Community.⁶⁵

At the same time, however, the community refused to ostracize or exclude those with dissenting views:

Until now, the members of the two once separated communities, who were not enrolled in a uniform community, and during the duration of the separation of the community enrolled indirectly under the jurisdiction of one or the other, and indeed enjoyed the right to vote.⁶⁶

The administration of this community maintained the privileged status of the Jewish elite, restricting leadership to propertied Jews:

Un-propertied individuals are disqualified from the voting and running rights in 13 and 14, and those who are under legal guardianship or are servants; who receive aid from the community; finally, those who are in the process of a bankruptcy or criminal proceedings, and who have already a judgment against them.⁶⁷

In addition to the wealthy, Magyarized Jews were given similar privileged status: "Individuals holding university diplomas, if they reside permanently in Miskolc, can vote unconditionally and be elected to all office."⁶⁸

The events of the late 1860s and 1870s brought into clearer focus two divergent tendencies. As Jews in Miskolc were integrated economically and demographically into a larger world, culminating in their emancipation, local communal activity survived. The corporate character of Hungarian society had assured that Jewish communal life would retain its organizational infrastructure.

In a broader sense, the protracted road to affiliation by Miskolc Jewry reveals a key aspect of the Emancipation Edict. That middle-ground communities like Miskolc Jews vacillated between Orthodoxy and Neolog with little or no consequence to their civic standing measured the non-intrusive nature of the new Hungarian state, which

placed no premium on a particular religious affiliation. As long as Hungarian Jewry continued to be economically productive and to vitalize the Magyar national cause, the state took little interest in internal communal affairs. This was not a new development but an outgrowth of the relationship between nobility and Jewry that had been largely indifferent to religious preference for over a century. It was this religious indifference that allowed Miskolc Jews to steer clear of the growing religious extremism of the 1860s and continue instead to pick and choose between tradition and innovation.

Notes

- 1 *Izraelita Megyei Jegyzőkönyv* (sic) [Israelite County Protocol] (Miskolc, 1854–1863) p. 12.
- 2 Macartney, p. 454. As Macartney points out, there was an initiative by Interior Minister Kübeck to include full equality for Jews, but Francis Joseph quashed it. See *ibid.*, n.2.
- 3 *Conscriptum Judaeorum; Születési, Házassági és meghalotti* (sic) *anyakönyv* I [Birth, Marriage and Death Registry] (Miskolc, 1833–1851) p. 11.
- 4 *Ibid.*, 776, p. 816.
- 5 See, for example, J.G. Kohl, *Hundert Tage auf reisen in den Osterreichischen Staaten*. (Dresden and Leipzig, 1842) volume I pp. 67–68.
- 6 For a complete summary and description of railway construction, see Károly Vörös, *Magyarország története VII*, pp. 955ff, including an illustrative map on p. 976 and a chronology of railway completions on p. 1500.
Indeed, even during the 1940s, Miskolc was still the main stop between the Carpathian Mountains and Budapest. One gentleman who grew up in a small village outside of Munkács told me that he went to Miskolc only “to change trains and use the bathroom” whole en route to Budapest.
- 7 *Ibid.*, p. 1142. The six towns that grew at a rate comparable to Miskolc were Arad, Szolnok, Nyíregyháza, Debrecen, Kolozsvár and Székesfehérvár. The towns other than Pest that grew at a faster rate were all chartered towns whose population growth, because of strict limitations on residence prior to 1840, were minuscule in 1850, hence the rapid rate of growth.
- 8 *200 éves a borsodi szénbányászat, 1786–1986* (Miskolc, 1986) pp. 38–40.
- 9 Tamás Csíki, *Városi zsidóság Északkelet- és Kelet-Magyarországon* [Urban Jews in Northeastern and Eastern Hungary] (Budapest, 1999) p. 123.
- 10 Groszman, *Magyar zsidók*, p. 35.
- 11 Dobrossy, *Miskolc története* IV/1, p. 364.

- 12 For a comprehensive analysis and appraisal of this legislation, see Macartney p. 464.
- 13 Henrik Pollák, "Adatok a Magyar Izraeliták Statistikájához" *Első Magyar Zsidó Naptár és Évkönyv: 1848-ik szökeővre* (Pest, 1848) pp. 111–115.
- 14 Csíki, *Városi zsidóság*, p. 125.
- 15 Macartney, p. 484 n.2. So unpopular was this decision that, in response, international Jewish creditors, James Rothschild among them, refused to lend money to Austria, "a kind of coalition was formed on the *bourses* of Paris and London, its object being to damage Austrian credit." As Macartney notes, the veto was, apart from the Eastern Question the sole topic of conversation in Paris and James Rothschild was "beside himself." This, in turn, forced the empire to issue an internal loan of 500 million Gulden. *Ibid.*, pp. 484–485.
- 16 Quoted in Julianna Puskás, "Jewish Leaseholders in the Course of Agricultural Development in Hungary, 1850–1930" in Michael Silber, ed., *Jews in the Hungarian Economy, 1760–1945* (Jerusalem, 1992) p. 108. Jewish land-speculation in the 1850s would eventually become land-leasing and land-owning in the 1860s and during Dualist Period. As Puskás points out, by 1910, there were 113 Jews with more than 500 hectares, 280 with holdings of 50 to 500 hectares, and hundreds more with less than 50 hectares, most of whom owned land between the Danube and the Tisza. *Ibid.*, p. 109–110. During the interwar period, anti-semitic writers and historians would attribute the decline of the Kingdom of Hungary to the growing number of Jewish landowners. See, for example, Gyula Szekfű, *Három nemzedék* [Three Generations] (Budapest, 1925) p. 225.
- 17 Macartney, *The Habsburg Monarchy*, p. 502 n. 3.
- 18 Puskás, "Jewish Leaseholders," p. 111. Puskás argues categorically that these Jews were a majority.
- 19 *Ibid.*, p.112.
- 20 Dobrossy, *Miskolc története* IV/1, pp. 338–340.
- 21 Bernstein, *A negyvennyolcas magyar szabadságharc*, p.171.
- 22 *Izraelita Megyei Jegyzőkönyv* (March 1857)
- 23 *Ibid.*
- 24 *Izraelita Megyei Jegyzőkönyv* (February, 1861) #53.
- 25 *Ibid.*, (February, 1861) #54.
- 26 *Ibid.*, pp. 220–221.
- 27 Abraham Hochmuth, *Die Judische Schul in Ungarn wie sie ist und wie sie sein soll* (Miskolc, 1851) p. 24.
- 28 *Ibid.*, p. 52.
- 29 Michael Silber, "The Emergence of Ultra-Orthodoxy: The Invention of a Tradition," in Jack Wertheimer ed., *The Uses of Tradition: Jewish Continuity in the Modern Era* (New York and Jerusalem, 1992) p. 28. The centrality of education in the spread of national culture and nationalist tensions was not unique to Hungary, but a central theme in nineteenth and twentieth century European history. See Eugen Weber, *Peasants in Frenchmen*, pp. 35–37.

- 30 *Izraelita Megyei Jegyzőkönyv* (July, 1861) #119.
- 31 “Statuten des Israelitischen Frauenvereines in Wien” *Jahrbuch des israelitischen Cultus-Gemeinden Ungarn* (Arad, 1860) pp. 93ff, especially #2, #14, and #21.
- 32 *Conscriptio Judaeorum* (Miskolc, 1848).
- 33 William Toll, “A Quiet Revolution: Jewish Women’s Clubs and the Widening Female Sphere, 1870–1920” *American Jewish Archives* 41 (1989) p. 7. Toll referred in this work specifically to American Jewish families with a declining birth rate. Even in Miskolc, where the average number of Jewish children per family was just under four, domestic servants could relieve a woman of a substantial portion of her household duties.
- 34 Contrast with Goldberg, *Crossing the Jabbok*, p. 192. Interestingly, while other Jewish women’s societies appeared as the communal system was breaking down, in Miskolc it marked communal organization at its apogee.
- 35 Dobrossy, *Miskolc története* IV/2, pp. 874–875.
- 36 *Izraelita Megyei Jegyzőkönyv* (February 19, 1860) #1.
- 37 The major source of information on this conflict is the newspaper *Ben Chananja*, which published regular news reports on events in Miskolc with particular frequency from the fall of 1863 through the summer of 1865, and periodic reports thereafter.
- 38 Moses Ezekiel Fischmann, “Divrei Shalom Ve-Emet,” in *Ben Chananja VIII* (1864) pp. 213–215.
- 39 *Responsa Bet Hillel* no.47, Av, 1862. Quoted in Katz, *A House Divided*, p. 165.
- 40 *Ben Chananja*, no. 20, 1863, pp. 364–365.
- 41 *Ibid.*, no. 38 (*Beilage*) pp. 697–699.
- 42 *Ibid.*, no. 46 p. 846. The ban on entering synagogues deemed unacceptable would become one of the principles of his Guardians of Faith Society. See Katz, *A House Divided*, p. 94.
- 43 *Ben Chananja*, no. 47 November 18, 1863, pp. 858–859.
- 44 *Ibid.*, no. 49, December 3, 1863, pp. 911–912.
- 45 *Ibid.*, no. 40 September 29, 1863, pp. 735–736.
- 46 *Ibid.*, no. 9 February 26, 1864, pp. 171–172.
- 47 *Ibid.*, no. 23 May 30, 1864, p. 479.
- 48 *Ibid.*, no. 24, June 19, 1864, p. 501.
- 49 *Ibid.*, no. 24 June 19, 1864 p. 502.
- 50 *Ibid.*, no. 14 20 April 1866.
- 51 Ezekiel Moses Fischmann, *Divrei Shalom Ve-Emet* [Words of Peace and Truth] Ben Chnanja 1864.
- 52 William McCagg, *Jewish Nobles and Geniuses in Hungary*.
- 53 On the role of Jews in post-1867 Miskolc politics, see Judit M. Tóvári, “A miskolci társadalom gazdasági vezető csoportjainak átrétegződése (1872–1917)” [The realignment of the leading social and economic groups of Miskolc, 1872–1917] *Századok* CXIV no.5 (1980) pp. 783–784. Compare also with Károly

- Vörös, *A legnagyobb adófizetők* which analyzed the representation of Budapest Jews in the tax registers of the city during the dualist period.
- 54 Eötvös, *A zsidók emancipációja*, p. 26.
- 55 Eötvös, *A zsidók emancipációja*, p. 19.
- 56 This episode has been summarized in Katz, *A House Divided*, pp. 89–216.
- 57 Katz, *A House Divided*, pp. 158–159 and 191–203.
- 58 Katz, *A House Divided*, p. 151.
- 59 For an analysis of the origins and outlook of this movement, see Howard Lupovitch, “Between Orthodox and Neolog: the Origins of the Status Quo Movement” *Jewish Social Studies* 9/2 (2003).
- 60 For a more in-depth analysis of the mentality of the Status Quo see Howard Lupovitch, “Between Orthodoxy and Neolog,” pp. 130ff.
- 61 Viktor Karady, “Religious Divisions, Socio-economic stratification and the modernization of Hungarian Jewry after the emancipation.” [Hereinafter Karady, “Religious Divisions”] in Michael Silber ed., *Jews in the Hungarian Economy* pp. 166–167.
- 62 Karady, “Religious Divisions,” p. 164.
- 63 *Statutes of the Miskolc Orthodox Israelite Community approved by the Budapest State Orthodox Israelite Mediation Board* July 7, 1878 (Miskolc, 1878).
- 64 *Ibid.*, p. 2 #1:a.
- 65 *Ibid.*, p. 2 #2.
- 66 *Ibid.*, p. 3 #5.
- 67 *Ibid.*, p. 4 #18.
- 68 *Ibid.*, p. 4 #16.

Conclusion

1878 and Beyond: Two Chambers of One Heart

There are two principle components in the religious life of the Miskolc Jewish Community, the old and the new, which are and always will be two chambers of a single heart.¹

On July 1, 1878 the Jewish community of Miskolc affiliated with Hungarian Orthodoxy, renaming itself the “Miskolc Orthodox Israelite Community” (*A Miskolczy* (sic) *Orthodox Izraelita Hitközség*): “The Orthodox Israelites living in vicinity of Miskolc establish a uniform, indivisible autonomous Israelite Orthodox community with the aim of supporting all communal institutions...this community shall employ and pay those functionaries deemed necessary for the Israelite community by the religious laws of the abridged version of the *Shulchan Aruch*.” This decision was hailed by the Orthodox movement as major triumph. After nearly a decade of vacillating between Orthodox, Neolog, and non-affiliation, Miskolc, the largest traditional community outside of Budapest, had not only embraced Orthodoxy, but paid homage to the abridged version of the *Shulchan Aruch*—the manifesto of Ultra-Orthodoxy.²

The impetus for Miskolc Jews to affiliate with Orthodoxy, after resisting and rebuffing the pressure to capitulate to the demands of Ultra-Orthodoxy for a dozen years, was more practical than ideological. The decision was motivated largely by fiscal concerns: that Miskolc Jewry would have the capability of “supporting all communal institutions” and be able to “employ and pay those functionaries deemed necessary for the Israelite community.” For the moment, gaining access to the resources of a state-wide movement superseded the ideological implications of affiliation.

Less than a month later, the decision to gain access to the resources of the larger organization was validated when the city of Mi-

skolc was struck by a devastating flood that caused “the total destruction of the large parts of the city, and a large number of victims,” including homes of communal buildings of Miskolc Jewry.³ Left to its own devices, it is questionable whether Miskolc Jewry could have recovered. In contrast to the relative isolation of Miskolc Jewry following the fire of 1843, when assistance from other Jewish communities was minimal, in the aftermath of the flood Miskolc Jews received substantial aid from other Orthodox communities.

As it turned out, however, by 1878 Miskolc Jews no longer needed financial aid from other Jewish communities. They joined in the city-wide efforts to repair the damages caused by the flood, which included repairing their homes and community buildings side by side with those of their Christian neighbors.⁴ In 1843, Miskolc Jews had looked to other Jewish communities for aid. In 1878, they looked to their neighbors and to the city government, a clear indication of how much Miskolc Jewry had become a part of the city during the intervening twenty-five years. This trend would continue largely unabated for more than forty years.

Emblematic of the expanding role of Miskolc Jewry in city life is the role of Joseph Popper in the city’s efforts to recover from the flood. During the cholera epidemic of 1873, he had been awarded the Black Knight medal, an honor typically reserved for a member of the nobility. In 1878, he supervised efforts to aid flood victims, and coordinated between the Jewish community and the city.⁵ He was eventually recognized as one of the leading physicians in Borsod County during the second half of the nineteenth century. Upon his death in 1896, a local newspaper summarized his achievements as a physician: “Dr. Joseph Popper medical works spanned 36 years in the history of the hospital, first and foremost, he nurtured a feeling for a new need for hospital construction that seeped into the public opinion.”⁶

Popper’s role as a city official marked the maturing of the symbiotic relationship between Jewry and nobility, particularly when viewed in comparison with the Jewish role during the Cholera Epidemic of 1831. In 1831, Jewish and city efforts were coordinated by János Szakmary, a county official who was employed by the Jewish community. In 1878, similar efforts were coordinated by Popper, a Jew who was employed by the county.

The growing role of Jews like Popper, however, eventually elicited antagonism from the ranks of the nobility. It traversed an occupational boundary implicit in the “unspoken contract, a sort of division of labor between the two leading elements of the Hungarian middle class, the Jews and the gentry.” According to this agreement, “the former [i.e. the Jews] would restrict their activities to the private economic and professional sectors, whereas the latter [i.e. the nobles] would monopolize the public political and professional sphere, thus avoiding any conflict of interest and minimizing competition.”⁷ By the end of the nineteenth century, the growing competition between middle-nobles and Jews would be an element in the rise of Hungarian anti-Semitism.⁸ Until the end of the first world war, though, such nascent antagonism would be overshadowed by a partnership born of the noble–Jewish symbiosis.

Popper was equally emblematic of the religious mentality of Miskolc Jewry. In 1869, Popper, the secretary of the Jewish Congress, had led the effort to find a point of compromise or reconciliation between the Neolog and Orthodox camps. Though this effort failed, the impulse behind it remained, and resurfaced during the 1890s in a conflict between Miskolc Jewry and the Orthodox Mediation Committee, a central institution of the Orthodox Movement. In fact, the solidarity between Miskolc Jewry and the city of Miskolc in 1878 contrasted the growing alienation between Miskolc Jews and the Orthodox movement. Less than two decades after affiliating with Orthodoxy, the fundamental ideological differences between Miskolc Jewry and the Orthodoxy Movement surfaced over the acceptability of Magyar-language sermons during synagogue services. Three times during the 1890s, Miskolc Jewry hired a preacher to deliver a Magyar-language sermon during the Saturday morning service. Each time, the Orthodox Mediation Committee, a central organ of the Orthodox movement, prevented the new preacher from assuming his post.⁹

For contemporary observers, the issue was not simply an ideological dispute over the proper language of a sermon, but the disparate attitudes of Miskolc Jewry and Orthodox leaders toward religious cooperation and compromise between traditionalists and progressives:

The Miskolc Jewish community, one of the largest in the country, is among those communities where the progressive, Magyarized elements formed a single community with the conservative elements in order to avoid a split. This unity sticks in the throat of the Orthodox Mediation Committee, which has attempted, more than once, to lure the traditionalists away from the progressives—only they have not succeeded as yet. The more educated element [in Miskolc] wants to preserve this unity despite the mischief that the Orthodox Mediation Committee has committed... Alas, in one of the most Magyarized towns not a word of Hungarian is heard in the temple, despite the will of the vast majority.¹⁰

In response, Miskolc Jews appealed to the central government, who intervened on their behalf:

In the matter of the discord that arose around the induction of a magyar preacher appointed by the Miskolc Izraelite Orthodox community, I am dispatching to the Orthodox Mediation Committee the attached petition in which...I aver that the most practical outcome of this controversy would be a path of friendly accord. Thus the community should endorse in full measure the patriotic aim that the appointment of a magyar preacher would realize in full force. In addition, this decision should be established by the act of this orthodox community's statutes...¹¹

For contemporary observers, the significance of this ruling was twofold. It affirmed “the patriotic desire which in Miskolc manifests in the aim of employing a magyar preacher.” In addition, it “recognized that the will of the majority is decisive.”¹²

In this regard, affiliation with Orthodoxy culminated decades of pragmatic decision-making through which Miskolc Jewry came of age by following the lines of least resistance. As long as the county was the principle organizing unit of Hungarian society, Miskolc Jewry tended toward county-wide communal organization. When central government began to supersede the county during the second half of the nineteenth century, Miskolc Jewry followed suit by affiliating with a state-wide organization.

The clash between Miskolc Jewry and the Orthodox movement was not simply a conflict between disparate religious views but the latest manifestation of a clash between two currents of traditional Judaism. Miskolc Jews, in their unselfconscious willingness to choose pragmatism over idealism and to blend tradition and innovation seamlessly,

perpetuated the impulse in traditional Judaism to absorb elements of the outside world in order to enhance their material and spiritual lives. Hungarian Orthodoxy, in its rejection of the outside world, perpetuated the impulse to insulate traditional Judaism from the perils of excessive contact with foreign culture—epitomized by communities like Miskolc. That neither approach defeated the other measured the tenacity of both, and anticipated their continued co-existence, sometimes harmonious, sometimes acrimonious, to this day.

The co-existence of these distinct approaches to traditional Judaism—indeed, the broad spectrum of religious observance in Hungary that ranged from total immersion to total indifference—reflected the larger cultural diversity of Hungarian Jewry. Ultra-Orthodox and Neolog were the most vociferous components of a spectrum of Jewish identity that ranged from anti-modernism to assimilationism. In a spectrum this rich, is it any wonder that the two Central European pioneers of Zionism were Hungarian Jews?

The religious diversity of Hungarian Jewry was made possible, and was symptomatic, of the larger structure of Hungarian politics and society. The limited centralization of Hungary, and the survival of county government facilitated local and regional diversity. Miskolc Jewry was but one manifestation of local variation. Moreover, mainstream Hungarian political discourse was, by the second half of the nineteenth century, relatively indifferent to religious differences within Judaism. Hungarian liberals were far more interested in the Magyarization of Hungarian Jewry than in the particular religious beliefs and practices of Hungarian Jews, evidenced by the willingness of József Eötvös to recognize three forms of Judaism as legitimate religious denominations. Thus, it was not surprising that traditional Judaism and patriotism were compatible from the perspective of liberal statesmen, even if not from the perspective of Ultra-orthodoxy.

This indifference to religious practice by Eötvös and other liberals was entirely self-serving and, for Jews, could cut both ways. A generation after Jews were emancipated and embraced as Magyars, Judaism was still a second-class religion. The Recepcio Debate of the mid-1890s, an attempt to place Judaism on equal footing with Catholicism and other Christian denominations, underlined the distinction between the status of Jews and Judaism.¹³

This, in retrospect, was a variation on one of the primordial themes in the debate over Jewish emancipation. From the outset of this debate during the French revolution, Jews were offered everything as individuals, but denied everything as a corporate group. A century later in Hungary, Jews had obtained everything as individuals: civic and political equality, and complete access not only to mainstream Hungarian society but to the nobility—its elite stratum. A generation after emancipation, Judaism was still denied entry into the Hungarian family of religions.

In a larger sense, the two events of 1878—the Flood and decision to affiliate with Orthodoxy—appropriately marked the sesquicentennial of the Jewish community of Miskolc. In one sense, Miskolc Jewry had come full circle in one hundred and fifty years, both in terms of their relations with local government and in their internal development. The first Jews who settled in Miskolc one hundred and fifty years earlier had fled from a well-established part of Central Europe where the government was bent on restricting them and preventing them from prospering. Once in Miskolc, they encountered a local government that welcomed Jews as allies in developing commerce, urban life, local government, and Magyar nationalism. The devastation caused by the flood launched a new effort rebuild the city, reminiscent of the frontier days of previous century. The joint effort to repair the damage caused by the flood and the determination of Miskolc Jews to bring the Magyar language into the synagogue, culminated a century and a half of cooperation between Magyars of the Jewish and Christian faith.

In another sense, though, Miskolc Jewry had come about-face in a century and a half. The first Jewish settlers in Miskolc had left behind in Moravia a well-established, well-ordered communal and super-communal infrastructure. Once in Miskolc, they built their own communal infrastructure from scratch. In 1878, they joined another super-communal infrastructure—Hungarian Orthodoxy.

The disparate relationship of Miskolc Jews with these two super-communal organizations underlines the stark differences between the traditional worlds of early eighteenth century Moravia and late nineteenth century Hungary. The traditional world of Moravia tolerated local variations and was fluid enough to be adapted by Jewish mi-

grants to suit the conditions of the Hungarian frontier. The traditional world of late nineteenth century Hungarian, in contrast, demanded total conformity from its constituents.

In the end, the synergy between tradition and innovation was inextricably woven into the fabric of Miskolc Jewry. Jews in Miskolc regarded their commitment to Jewish tradition and to Magyar nationalism not only as compatible but as inseparable. Like two chambers of one heart, one sustained the other, and together they provided the foundation for the rise of Hungarian Jewry.

Notes

- 1 *Egyenlőség* [Equality] 17 no. 24 (June 26, 1898) p. 9.
- 2 *A miskolczy orthodox. Izraelita hitközség alapszabályai* [The Statutes of the Miskolc Orthodox Israelite Community] (Miskolc, 1881) p. 1.
- 3 "Miskolci árvizek és a város 'végpusztulása' 1878-ban" [Floods in Miskolc and the 'Total destruction of the City in 1878] in István Dobrossy, *Miskolc írásban és képeken* Vol. 1, pp. 240–241.
- 4 *Ibid.*, p. 242.
- 5 Péter Ujvári, *Magyar zsidó lexikon*, p. 717.
- 6 Dobrossy, *Miskolc története* IV/2, p. 791.
- 7 Michael Silber, "A Jewish Minority in a Backward Economy: an Introduction" in Silber ed., *Jews in the Hungarian Economy, 1760–1945* (Jerusalem, 1992) p. 21.
- 8 Mária Kovács, *Liberal Professions and Illiberal Politics*. New York and Oxford. 1995.
- 9 "Miskolczon" [In Miskolc] *Egyenlőség* October 31, 1897, p. 11.
- 10 *Ibid.*, pp. 11–12.
- 11 "A Miskolczi magyar hitszónok ügye" [The Matter of the Hungarian Preacher in Miskolc] *Egyenlőség* December 5, 1897, pp. 8–9.
- 12 *Ibid.*, p. 9.
- 13 On the recepcio debate, see Nathaniel Katzburg, "Hungarian Jewry's Struggle for Religious Equality during the 1890s," (Hebrew) *Zion XXI–XXII* (1957) pp. 119–148.

Appendix

***“Divrei Shalom Ve-Emet* [Words of Peace and Truth]”: A Call for Unity by Rabbi Moses Ezekiel Fischmann of Miskolc¹**

Two rabbis, exceptional in Torah and piety, my neighbors, raised a ruckus in our congregations near and far when, in the new Great Synagogue that was built and dedicated on the New Moon of Elul under my congregation here in Miskolc, claiming that the congregational led prohibited choir singing, that they follow in the ways of the gentiles; they maligned my congregation and me, saying I did not combat the new customs, and that I officiate, preach, and tend to my duties at the synagogue. Thus I have found it in my heart, according to the rabbinic dictum “and you shall exonerate yourself before God and Israel,” to make known this whole matter, and I shall, lest words of hatred or faulting of those trying to defame me come to pass. It has been fifty years that with God’s help I have been rabbi and guide in various communities and lands, and praise the Lord I have always been at peace with my neighboring rabbis, and have never known words of conflict or confrontation, and I have never tried to, and there were not any in the house of my teachers and forefathers who live in this vibrant land; and even now that I am old and sated, the good Lord has given me sons and sons in-law who carry the banner of the Torah as rabbis and lead their flocks in peace and tranquility. So I can say with heartfelt thanks: God has found favor with me and mine—so how can I now do that which I have never done in my youth: to quarrel, to confront, to wage a campaign? God forbid I should do such a thing! My goal in this letter that I send to the communities of my people is only to make the matter known, to justify, and to exonerate, and to defend the honor of my congregation and its leaders...

There are many in my congregation who like the new customs as they are practiced in larger cities of Vienna and Pest in their temples and in many other communities. Lovers of these new customs can be found virtually everywhere, even in my congregation, whose number of households is the third largest in the land, and they are a large part of the congregation. And when they built a great synagogue, fights broke out over new customs that made their way in. Other than this, our ears have been spared from such strife and quarreling that has broken out in our time and has ruptured and fragmented the house of Israel in a fight of the sects, a fight whose victory cannot mean elation but only descent and growing alienation until one community becomes two camps. All of this has brought bitterness, fear, and concern lest this corruption should reach my own community. During the two years since the construction of the great synagogue began, I have been beset with unsettling angst, that into the synagogue would come new customs forbidden by law, changes in liturgy, songs in foreign tongues: changes whose sole purpose is for appearances and to resemble the gentiles. More than few people have made known to me that there are those in our congregation who wish to introduce an organ into the synagogue. Heaven is my witness that such disturbing notions drove the sleep from my eyes and the tranquility from my heart for four years I have not stopped warning my people passionately not to change their opinions with regard to any existing custom. I counseled and conferred quietly with others how to proceed and this is the advice that I gave: I will oppose with all my might with words of exhortation and reproach—for I have only the power of speech—anything that is forbidden by the *Shulchan Aruch* or is known to be of gentile origin, and I will not desist until I have vanquished the efforts of those who wish to plant a foreign seed in the vineyard of Israel. In contrast, with regard to those things which have appeared recently that are not forbidden and not in violation of the law, I will stand off, keep silent, and wait to see whether or not a majority of my congregants will opt for them. I have remained true to this advice. When I was told that the *mehizab* around the women's section was low enough so that women could be seen almost entirely, I convinced the leaders of the congregation that this should not be and that is was against the *Shulchan Aruch* and other rabbinic decrees and proper prac-

tice, and the leaders and the proprietors of the building rushed to fix the deformity. When the leaders made it known publicly that they wanted to appoint a cantor who sings choir music, and cantors came to audition, they chose one and no one spoke out or whistled. Long before this, when one of the leaders of the community was known to despise these new customs, I spoke with him privately and informed him that it would be appropriate to ask the congregation if they want choral music or not, and he refrained from making an issue out of it. Moreover, it is known that:

a) Although some of the men who advise in communal matters signed the protocol in favor of a *chorshul* while others opposed, nonetheless there was no impetus to fight against innovations or even impede them.

b) I have found nothing in the music of the *chorshul* in violation of the laws of the *Shulchan Aruch*, and the leaders of the community enjoined the cantor not to play music gentile songs or songs played in saloons, and on the whole I have seen that the leaders are right to nix anything faulty.

c) The old synagogue is still standing, and has been renovated, and many pray there as before so it is no hardship for anyone who does not want to hear choral music...

But the voices of prayer have not ceased and old customs have not been changed, so why should I disturb the community over this minor innovation? Is it not true that the cantors and their melodies and the composers and their songs have been a stumbling block to the rabbis, who could not withstand them and allowed Israel to have them? Yet I knew that other rabbis, if members of their congregations would want to introduce even new tunes into their synagogues, as is done in my town, would roar like lions and not rest until the matter was nullified out of a concern lest such an innovation pave the way for other things not in accordance with the law. But I, who have known and recognized my place for along time, held my piece, analyzed and weighed everything, and found no other way to preserve the truth and the maintain the peace other than the way I followed—and, in this regard, our sages taught: “Do not judge your friend until you stand in his place.” There are many around me who, in the fire of

their zealously, ignored this warning and raised their voices against me and my congregation...and that they would perhaps be more heeded if they presented themselves before the leaders of my congregation in a positive way, and they were shown that it is not good to introduce such things into this county, as the sages wrote, "and this is the most cherished way in such matters and lesser customs like these that one should not awaken judgmental-ness, rather the sages should stand afar and neither prohibit nor permit." These wise men should see that even the sages in holy communities that preserve all the old customs with all their might must at times be deterred by the times. Thus I see, that the good and righteous among them will exonerate us. And the redeemer of Israel and his holiness will protect his people.

Note

1 *Ben Chananja* vol. 4 (1863).

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The present volume examines the social and political history of the Jews of Miskolc—the third largest Jewish community in Hungary—and presents the wider transformation of Jewish identity during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It explores the emergence of a moderate, accommodating form of traditional Judaism that combined elements of tradition and innovation, thereby creating an alternative to Orthodox and Neolog Judaism. This form of traditional Judaism reconciled the demands of religious tradition with the expectations of Magyarization and citizenship, thus allowing traditional Jews to be patriotic Magyars.

By focusing on Hungary, this book seeks to correct a trend in modern Jewish historiography that views Habsburg Jewish History as an extension of German Jewish History, most notably with regard to emancipation and enlightenment. Rather than trying to fit Hungarian Jewry into a conventional Germano-centric taxonomy, this work places Hungarian Jews in the distinct contexts of the Habsburg Monarchy and the Danube Basin, positing a more seamless nexus between the eighteenth and nineteenth century. This nexus was rooted in a series of political experiments by Habsburg sovereigns and Hungarian noblemen that culminated in civic equality, and in the gradual expansion of traditional Judaism to meet the challenges of the age.

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